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Editor's note

WHEN THOMAS FARRINER,

a baker in Pudding Lane, east London, retired to bed one fateful night in 1666, he could not have imagined that his failure to extinguish the embers smouldering near his oven would change the face of the capital forever. By nightfall, swathes of the city were ablaze. In the words of the famous diarist Samuel Pepys, "it was extremely dreadful, for it looks just as if it was at us; and the whole heaven on fire". As we gear up to the **Great Fire of London's** 350th anniversary, Alexander Larman gives us the day-by-day story of the inferno via Pepys' eye-witness account (p.26).

While the fire was a disaster, we also owe much to it. The hotchpotch of architectural styles that consequently characterise London are part of its charm – and, as such, this issue, we're proud to introduce our new dedicated London section in celebration of those quirks. Flick through to find the top ten things to do in the capital at Christmas (p.56); to step inside the glorious time capsule that is the late **Dennis Severs'** eccentric Spitalfields house, where candlelit Christmas tours are one of its many atmospheric highlights (p.40); to go behind the scenes at **Harrods'** famous food halls (p.59); to snoop inside **Eltham Palace's** Art Deco addition to King Henry VIII's childhood home (p.33); and to allow Brenda Cook to share her London insider tips (p.48).

Elsewhere, historian Dan Jones regales us with the bloody secrets of **Stirling Castle** (p.17), site of William Wallace's victory. And as the world awaits **Downton Abbey's** finale, Jessica Fellowes, niece of its writer Lord Fellowes and author of the accompanying books, remembers her all-time favourite scenes, plus we whisk you off on a tour of the locations made famous by *Downton* (p.66). Until next time...

NANCY ALSOP *Editor*



Page 76 The Mermaid Inn in Rye, Sussex

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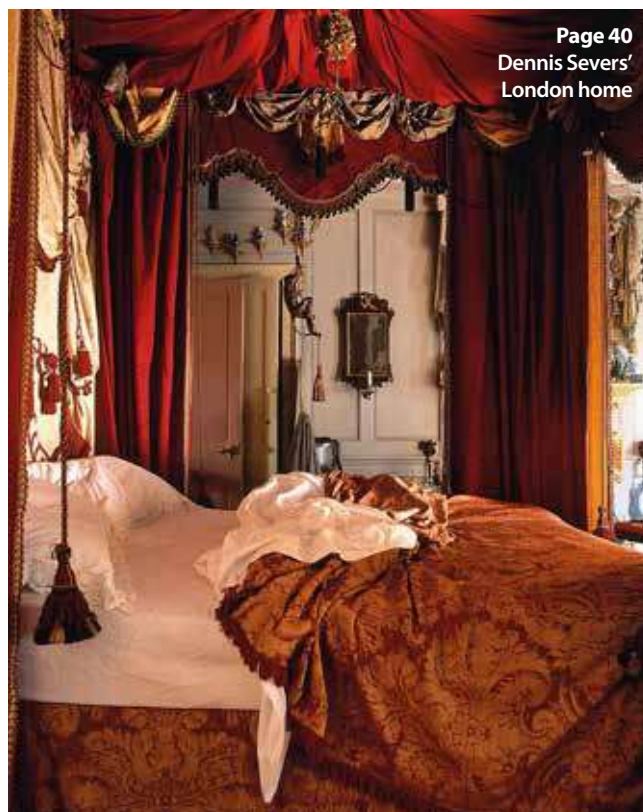
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Dennis Severs' London home



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Cogges Manor Farm, one of the locations used in *Downton Abbey*

CONTRIBUTORS

Jessica Fellowes

Jessica is an author and public speaker who has toured all over America on the subject of *Downton Abbey*, the show created by her uncle, Julian. Previously deputy editor of *Country Life* magazine, she lives with her family, chickens and oversized dog in Oxfordshire.



Dan Jones

Dan is a bestselling historian, journalist and TV presenter. He presents *Secrets of Great British Castles* for Channel 5 and his books include *The Plantagenets* (a *New York Times* bestseller); *The Hollow Crown* (a *Sunday Times* "Book of the Year"); and *Magna Carta*.



Alicia Pollett

Alicia is a food, lifestyle and portrait photographer. She has shot for a wide portfolio of foodie clients, including Manicomio Restaurants, Del'Aziz, Nama, Provenance and Hale & Hardy. This issue, she went behind the scenes at Harrods.



Discover Britain

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Email: editorial@discoverbritainmag.com

Editor Nancy Alsop
Art Editor Clare White
Sub Editor Sally Hales

Group Advertisement Manager Natasha Syed
Sales Executive Elizabeth Dack
Sales Executive Helena Murphy
Sales Executive Terri Weyers

MANAGEMENT

Managing Director Paul Dobson
Deputy Managing Director Steve Ross
Commercial Director Vicki Gavin
Publisher Caroline Scott
Digital Marketing Manager James Dobson
Circulation Manager William Delmont
Brand Manager Chatty Dobson

ONLINE

Digital Product Manager Oliver Morley-Norris
Digital Marketing Co-ordinator Andreea Dragoi
Digital Executive Scarlett Lill

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Travel notes

Sally Hales tours the country to bring you
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FORAGER IN THE FOREST

Set in a 19th century Victorian hotel in the Lake District, the newly revamped Forest Side hotel is big on local resources. Head chef Kevin Tickle, formerly at L'Enclume (time and again ranked the best restaurant in Britain), will alter the menu daily to accommodate what's fresh in the 46 acres of forageable grounds and kitchen garden. www.theforestsides.com



ISLAND LIFE

The Isle of Eriska hotel (north of Glasgow, on a 300-acre private island) was last year named the most romantic in the UK. Now it has unveiled a new luxury thermal suite with sauna, steam room and mud Rasul room. Hideaway heaven. www.eriska-hotel.co.uk



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CULINARY GRAND TOUR

Pennethorne's, a Grand Tour-themed eatery, has hit Somerset House on the Strand, London. The menu is inspired by architect of the 1849 New Wing, James Pennethorne, and his 19th century travels around Europe; ideal for a mouthful of the continent. www.pennethornescape.co.uk



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Photo © Oxford Mail

“The world is so silly as to admire my absurdities...”



Lord Byron described Beau Brummell as “having nothing remarkable in his style of dress, except a ‘certain exquisite propriety.’” That Brummell advocated shoes be polished with champagne may have constituted basic standards in Byron’s book. For the rest of us, Brummell remains an enduring icon of Regency dandyism.

Credited as the man who trailblazed the men’s suit we know today, Brummell ditched knee breeches and stockings and strode out in full-length trousers, immaculate shirts and neckties. Though he made light of his talents, writing to Lady Hester Stanhope that “the world is so silly as to admire my absurdities,” he was more than an arbiter of taste: he would leave a sartorial legacy for two centuries.

George Bryan “Beau” Brummell was born in Downing Street in 1778 to Mary and William Brummell, politician and private secretary to Lord North. At Eton he was noted for his wit and manners, making connections that would serve him well in later life, but it was in the army that he began to infiltrate high society in earnest. It was no lowly lords or minor marquises that Brummell set his cap at, but the Prince Regent and future King George IV himself. Serving in the prince’s regiment, the 10th Light Dragoons, he came to the royal’s attention on account of his quick wit and elegance. He progressed quickly to become a captain in 1776 and was soon an indispensable member of the prince’s in-crowd. He drank, paraded

Fine and dandy

Beau Brummell: favourite of the Prince Regent, inventor of the men’s suit and 18th century wit

and, when the regiment was moved from London to Manchester, resigned his post on account of the city being “disagreeable”. And all this he did with royal impunity.

Brummell entered London society in 1799, where he acquired the nickname “Beau”. The dandy entertained and was entertaining. His soirées were *the* places to see and be seen. He was inspired by and inspired a legion of female consorts, chief among which was

Frederica, Duchess of York. But none of this could save him.

Famed for his wit, he was equally infamous for his rudeness, even alienating the prince, whom he insulted (“Alvanley, who’s your fat friend?” he asked, referring to His Majesty). This same impulse to arrogance also led him to extravagance (he claimed to dress himself on £800 per year if frugal; the average wage was £1 per week), gambling and debt. But when he crossed one debtor, Richard Meyler – “Dick the Dandy-killer” – the wronged man declared his intentions to bring him to justice. Brummell fled to Calais in 1816.

He ended his days syphilitic in an asylum in 1840. Still he mustered the strength to communicate his disdain in writing: “Imagine a position more wretched than mine – they have put me with all the common people.” Today he would be gratified to know that his statue stands tall on Jermyn Street, central London, opposite the menswear destination, Emma Willis. His defining witticism for posterity? “Fashions come and go; bad taste is timeless.” ■



RADIO TIMES

Roberts Radio's century-long success is testament to one man's hard graft and determination. **Discover Britain** tunes in



When Harry Roberts left school, aged 14, with ambitions to follow his brother into lorry driving, it could scarcely have been predicted that he would go on to found an iconic Royal Warrant-holding British brand. Thwarted in his ambition when he failed to raise the funds to buy a vehicle, the hard-working lad, born in 1910 in east London, was dejected but not derailed.

Radio days

Instead, Roberts found work at the Rees Mace Manufacturing Company, which had done a roaring trade in wireless sets since the first broadcast was transmitted in 1922. Sufficiently steeped in his trade, Roberts encountered one Leslie Bidmead, a technical virtuoso with a special interest in radio sets, on his uppers after being conned by an entrepreneur. Bidmead's landlord, a Barnett – also owner of The Electrical Devices Company – was interested to know how he would pull himself up and, more to the point, pay the rent. Bidmead cited Roberts, by then noted for his selling flair, as his would-be saviour. Major Barnett smelled an opportunity, offering to provide capital if the youngsters would produce receivers on commission under his company, Eldeco. Within two years, despite miserly commission, the duo's success riled Barnett. He proposed to change the structure of their pay. "Would

that be upwards or downwards, Major Barnett?" Roberts asked. "Don't be silly!" replied Barnett. "In that case, we shall be leaving today," came the response.

World War Two

By 1936, business was buoyant. Turnover had doubled to £6,400 a year, and when World War Two hit, it did wonders for trade; in 1939, Roberts Radio's turnover rose to £20,000 as demand for wireless sets grew exponentially. Roberts was let off military service on receipt of a missive that read: "We don't close down radio factories." Roberts Radio still contributed to the war effort. It made broadcast receivers for the RAF, while Morse key and plug assemblies were turned out for the Ministry of Aircraft Production. Personal gratification came in 1940, in the form of a letter from a Harrods buyer, which read: "I had the pleasure of selling Her Majesty The Queen... one of your Model M4D for her personal use." In 1955 Messrs Roberts Radio Co. Ltd was listed as "Radio Manufacturers to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II"; two years later, Harry's son Richard was requested to demonstrate the range to Prince Charles and Princess Anne; and the company's first transistor

model was received by the Queen in 1958. The would-be lorry driver had come a long way.

When Harry Roberts died on 14 June 1969, his family received a deluge of letters. One read: "Harry had that lovely gift of making one feel nicer than one really was!" ■

www.robertsradio.co.uk



Bottom to top: The V&A's Britain Can Make It exhibition, 1946; a delivery in post-war Britain; the "Junior", 1948; George VI and Queen Elizabeth; Gilbert Harding at the Roberts Radio stand in 1953, with Leslie Bidmead and Richard Roberts; the R66, 1956



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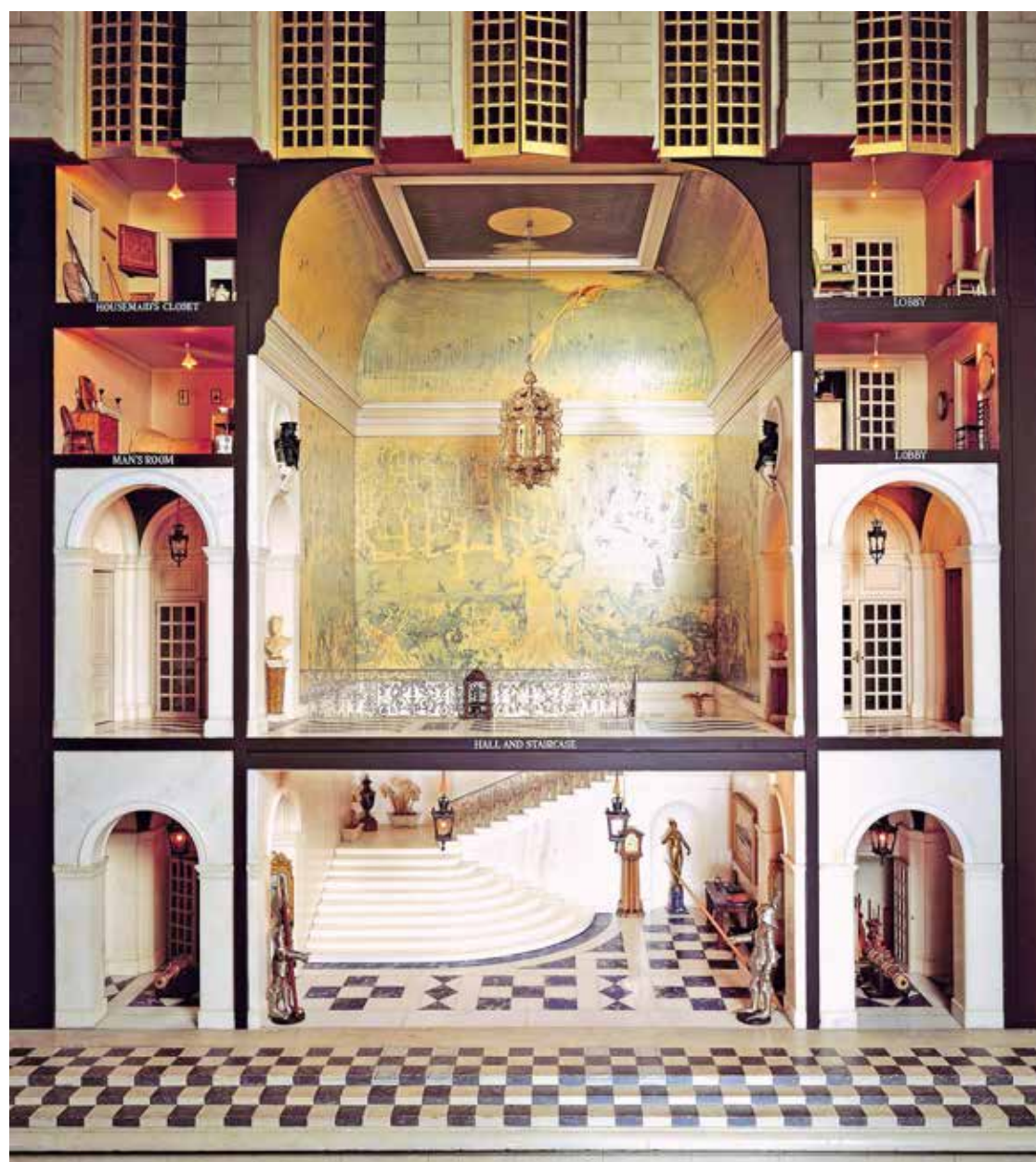
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Small Tales

It took 1,500 craftsmen to create Queen Mary's Sir Edwin Lutyens-designed dolls' house, now at Windsor Castle. Its artistry even helped the country convalesce after the war, finds **Jemima Coxshaw**



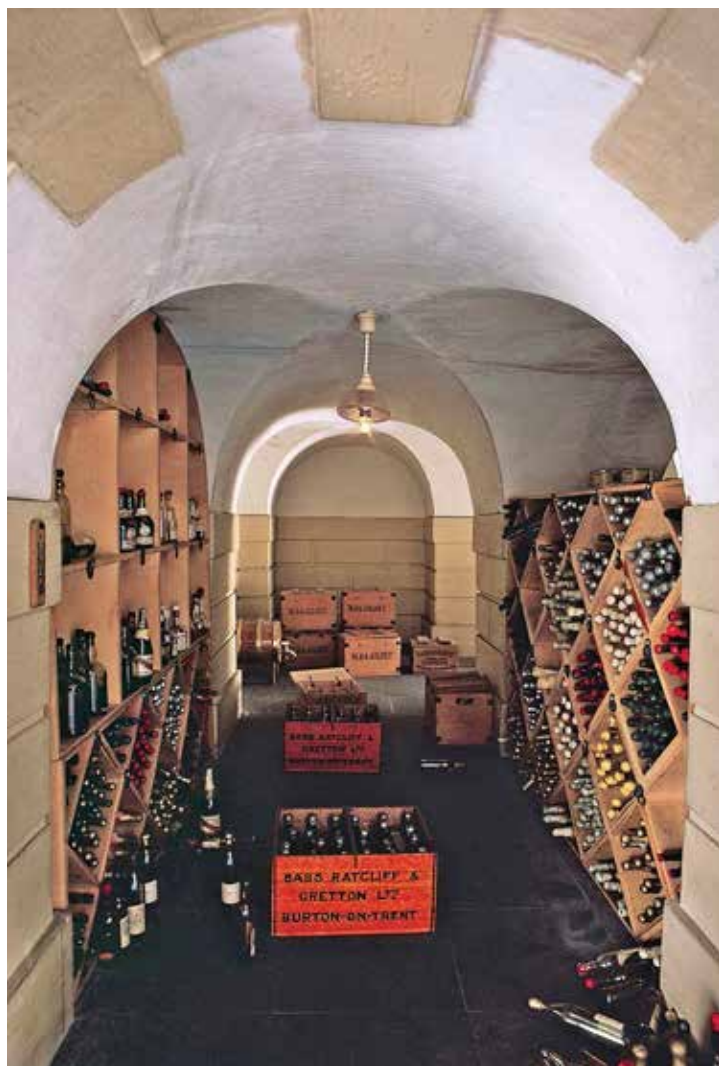


Queen Mary, wife of King George V, declared that when she died, India would be etched on her heart. It stands to reason then that when she commissioned what remains the greatest dolls' house in existence, she went directly to the British architect who had been chiefly in charge of colonial India's imperial capital, New Delhi, for the past nine years: Sir Edwin Lutyens.

The idea to create a dolls' house came to Her Majesty in 1921 via her cousin, Princess Marie Louise, who approached Lutyens about the execution of a house that would represent the 1920s in miniature. The architect accepted. In his words: "There will never be great architects or great architecture without great patrons." In Queen Mary, he had secured the supreme benefactor.

For this was to be no ordinary dolls' house. Standing at over three feet, and remarkable for the detail of the objects within it, many of which are 1:12 scale replicas of items in Windsor Castle, it was far from a mere plaything; it was to act as a showcase for some of the outstanding artists and artisans of the early 20th century. Consequently, the perfect Palladian façade houses an interior as fully functional and luxurious as any royal household in the 1920s. Water runs through its diminutive pipes; the loos have working flushes; the fleet of royal limousines in the garage boast running engines; paintings ➤

Windsor



Clockwise, previous page: The table set for dinner; a cross-section of the dolls' house, standing at over three-feet; the luxury bathroom, with running taps; the Palladian exterior
Clockwise, this page: The fully stocked wine cellar; the sweeping entrance hall; the library, complete with tomes penned by well-known authors; Gertrude Jekyll's garden

were commissioned from the likes of Sir Alfred Munnings; the garden is by Gertrude Jekyll; the cigars were produced to scale by Dunhill; and the books on its shelves were written specifically for the house by the luminary likes of Rudyard Kipling, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, J M Barrie and Somerset Maugham.

Lutyens must, surely, be considered as much of a force behind the masterpiece of miniature architecture as his royal patron. He hosted what he termed "Dollyleuyah Dinners", through which he enticed some 1,500 people to get involved; 250 craftsmen, 700 artists and 600 writers among them.

In the convalescent climate of a financially unstable post-World War One world, the dolls' house proved just the tonic. Completed in 1924, it was displayed at the British Empire Exhibition until 1925, an expo conceived to buoy the population. At its centre stood this masterpiece, a triumphant symbol of what the country could produce. Its 1.6 million visitors were inspired.

This sublime document to Edwardian endeavour was, wrote Queen Mary on receipt of the finished article, "the most perfect present that anyone could receive." In turn, the house was gifted to Mary's granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth II; it remains a highlight at Windsor Castle, its home since 1925, where it sits in a room designed for it by Lutyens, the most exquisite of Russian dolls. ■

www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle





SMALL WORLD: Visit the best of the rest of Britain's historic dolls' houses

MUSEUM OF LONDON, BARBICAN

Created between 1740 and 1750, the dolls' house named after the family built for and exemplified 18th-century dolls' house. It is not made as toys; they served as miniature scale illustrations of wealthy households of the day, right down to the furnishings and domestic equipment, making them important and historical documents. www.museumoflondon.org.uk



NEWBY HALL AND GARDENS, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Newby Hall, built in the 1690s by Sir Christopher Wren, this year received an exquisite donation in the form of 70 miniature houses. Created over 40 years across the 20th and 21st centuries, they are the life's work of friends Caroline Hamilton and Jane Fiddick, and now form part of the Historic Houses Association property's fascinating permanent collection. www.newbyhall.com



MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD, BETHNAL GREEN, LONDON

Amid the nostalgic display of toys on show at the idiosyncratic museum – an east London outpost of the Victoria and Albert Museum's vast repository – is a collection of dolls' houses, ranging from those built in the 17th century and one donated in 1921 by Queen Mary herself, right up to an example from the 1960s. www.vam.ac.uk/moc



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Stirling Castle is built high on a volcanic crag, just 40 miles from Edinburgh

Inset: Mary Queen of Scots, for whom the castle was a childhood home

Highland fling

Dan Jones, presenter of *Secrets of Great British Castles*, visits Stirling Castle, where the spirit of William Wallace, aka Braveheart, lives on



Stirling



Above: A painted wood carving of King James IV
Right: The imposing entrance to Stirling Castle, site of William Wallace's great rebel triumph against the English, and later childhood home to the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots

In around 1250 the English monk and chronicler Matthew Paris completed his great map of Britain. Colourful, detailed and geographically well informed, it shows many of the great national landmarks that still survive today, including Windsor Castle, the Tower of London and Hadrian's Wall.

One of the most important of these lies in the north. It is Stirling Bridge: a thin causeway that serves as the only point of contact between mainland Britain – England, Wales and the Scottish lowlands – and a place Paris names as “scocia ultra marina”: Scotland beyond the sea.

We know today that Paris was exaggerating. But only just. Northern Scotland is not an island across the sea. But it was certainly remote, divided from the rest of the realm by the long, wide-mouthed River Forth. And Stirling, a small and pretty town about 40 miles from Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh, was the first place upriver that the cold, rapid waters of the Forth could be safely crossed. Anyone who wanted to travel from the wild, mountainous country of northern Scotland to the milder, flatter terrain of the south had to pass over Stirling's narrow medieval bridge. It was, therefore, a place of ➤







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Mary Queen of Scots' richly lavish bedroom at Stirling Castle, resplendent with royal purples

vital strategic importance. To protect it, ancient Scottish kings erected a castle. The castle still stands. Driving into town and seeing it looming over the surrounding countryside, perched on a high volcanic crag, is one of the magnificent sights in Britain. Walking around it, you can soak up the history of a place that was once passed through by Braveheart, Robert the Bruce and Mary Queen of Scots.

One of Stirling's most famous moments – celebrated all over the world thanks to Mel Gibson's 1995 film *Braveheart* – occurred on September 11, 1297, when a force of Scottish rebels led by William Wallace attacked an army of English soldiers loyal to Edward I "Longshanks" – who also liked to be known as the "Hammer of the Scots". The battle was fought below the castle in a bend in the river, and it ended in a resounding victory for Wallace and his men.

It was a tremendously bloody battle in which one of the English commanders was captured and flayed; Wallace kept a strip of his skin to use as a sword-belt. He was later repaid in kind when he was captured and taken to London to be ritually dismembered as a traitor. Yet his memory – strongly associated with the dream of an independent Scotland – lives on in Stirling today, as does that of his near-contemporary Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, who smashed the English at the battle of

Bannockburn in 1314, and whose statue stands by the gates of Stirling Castle.

There are plenty more medieval memories in Stirling. Visitors can stand on its walls and look out at the field where Edward I once aimed his biggest, most dangerous trebuchet (siege catapult), known as "Warwolf". Yet the castle as it stands today is not very medieval at all. In fact, most of its architecture – ornate and elegantly French in many places – dates to a later period in Scottish history, during the reigns of the Stuarts. The bulk of that work was commissioned by three of those kings – James IV, James V and James VI – in the 16th century.

James IV was one of the most extraordinary kings in all of British history: a true renaissance prince, passionately interested in art, literature, music, science, military technology and building. He employed a personal alchemist at Stirling Castle, tasking him with finding the secret of turning base metals into gold – although the alchemist spent a good deal of the king's budget for this task on his (and Scotland's) favourite drink: whisky.

The Stuarts had a frosty relationship with their royal neighbours, the Tudors, and James IV was killed in 1513 at Flodden, in Northumberland, while doing battle with an army loyal to his brother-in-law Henry VIII. James' son and successor James V was crowned in the chapel at Stirling – and so was the most famous Stuart of them ➤



A tapestry in Mary Queen of Scots' bedroom, featuring a unicorn, a symbol of Scotland

all, Mary Queen of Scots, who spent her early years at the castle. Beautiful and charismatic but cursed with appalling judgment and woeful taste in husbands, Mary was forced to flee her political enemies in Scotland in 1567. She sought refuge with her cousin Elizabeth I of England, but was imprisoned and executed nearly 20 years later for plotting with Elizabeth's enemies.

The Stuarts of Stirling Castle had the last laugh: in 1603 Mary's son succeeded to the English throne, becoming James VI (of Scotland) and I (of England), and establishing the Stuart monarchy over both countries. But as the Stuarts moved south to London, Stirling's royal history ended and, in subsequent centuries, it became a military fortress and then a military barracks. There is still a museum on the site illustrating the history of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders regiment of the British Army.

Like Edinburgh Castle down the road, Stirling glowers over the town around it. Likewise, its history looms large in the stories of Scotland and Britain. Recently renovated and superbly laid out for tourists, this is one of the must-see sights in lowland Scotland. ■

www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk

Dan Jones' latest book is *Magna Carta: The Making and Legacy of the Great Charter* (Viking)

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THE BEST OF THE REST OF STIRLING

National Wallace Monument

This gothic tower, a monument to rebel fighter William Wallace, stands on the Abbey Craig, a volcanic crag above Cambuskenneth Abbey. It was from this vantage point that Wallace was said to have watched the gathering of the army of King Edward I of England, just before the Battle of Stirling Bridge. A number of artefacts believed to have belonged to Wallace are on display, including the Wallace Sword, a 1.63-metre (5ft, 4in) long sword. www.nationalwallacemonument.com

Doune Castle

A few miles outside Stirling is the 14th century Doune Castle. It was home to Robert Stewart, the 1st Duke of Albany, ruler of Scotland, in all but name, from 1388 to 1420. Doune's most striking feature is the 100ft gatehouse, which includes the splendid Duke's Hall with its musicians' gallery, double fireplace and carved oak screen. It's also

a popular TV location, having appeared in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and *Game of Thrones*. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Church of the Holy Rude

Nearby the castle is a medieval parish church, The Church of the Holy Rude, where a triumphant King James VI was crowned King of Scots on 29 July 1567. The Holy Rude still functions as a church today with a service every Sunday. www.holyrude.org

STAY IN STIRLING

Plane Castle

Fifteen minutes from Stirling and set amid beautiful countryside, the medieval Plane Castle is made up of the Fortalice, the Tower and the Manor. The latter two are available to rent; the Plane Tower features a banqueting hall in which guests can enjoy the views from stone seats that have been used for 650 years, or head to the castle battlements to see the Ochil Hills and the beginning of the Highlands. The Manor House, which dates back to 1528, is riddled with a series of secret passageways. www.planecastle.co.uk



The 14th century Doune Castle is just a few miles outside Stirling



King James VI was crowned at The Church of the Holy Rude in 1567

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GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

It is 350 years since the Great Fire of London ripped through the capital. **Alexander Larman** traces the progress of the blaze over the five days it raged, via the diaries of Samuel Pepys





London



Previous page: The raging inferno, 1666, captured on canvas by an unknown artist, and, **inset**, Samuel Pepys in 1666 by John Hayls **Above:** London, pre-fire, in 1647

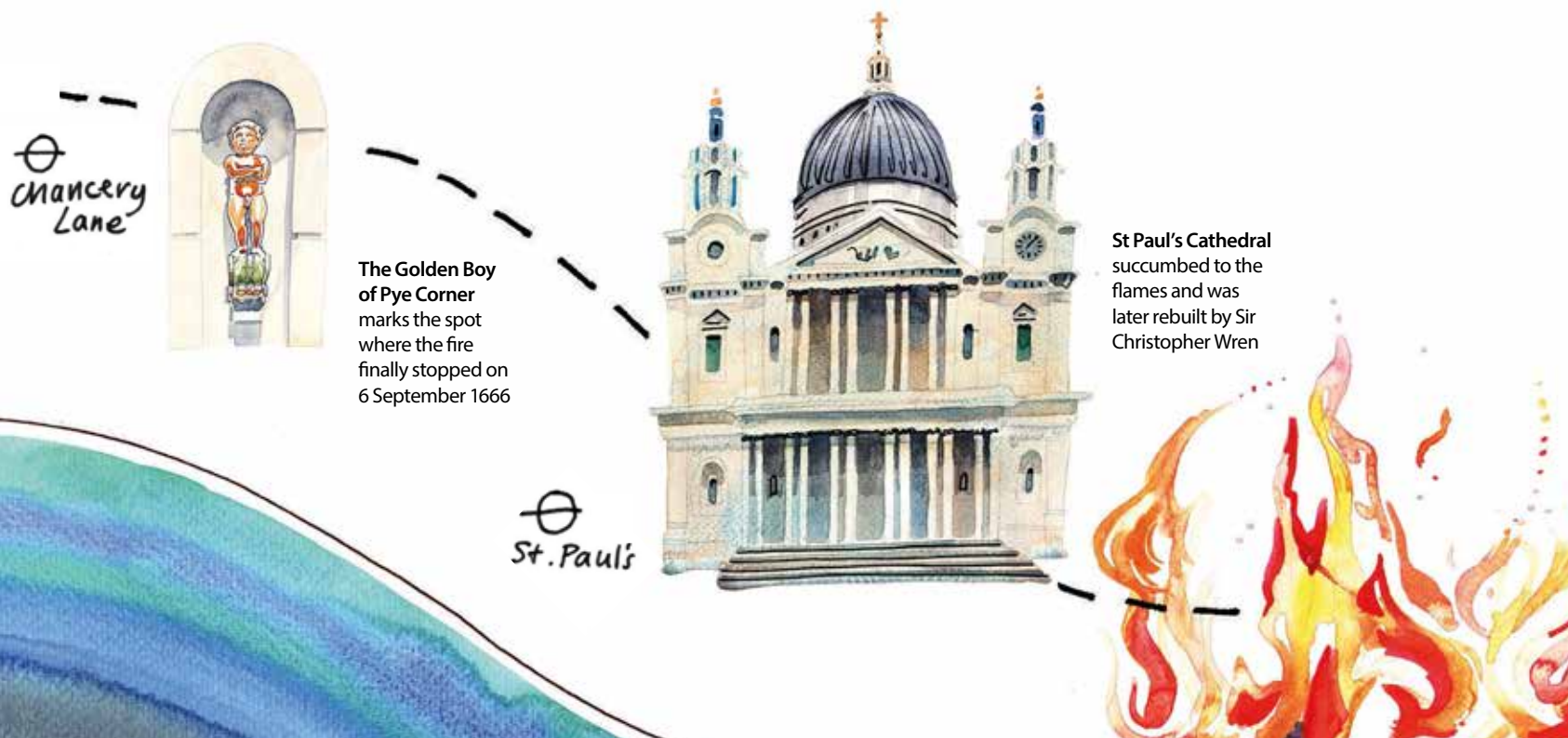
To see a permanent memorial to London's most notorious disaster, ignited by man and stoked by nature, head to the 17th century Monument. In the heart of the City, it was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, along with his colleague Robert Hooke, and the 61-metre high column marks the exact distance between its location and the baker's shop in Pudding Lane where, on 2 September 1666, the Great Fire of London began. With a major new exhibition, "Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire and Revolution", opening at Greenwich's National Maritime Museum in November, it's time to retrace our steps 350 years and see how London's landscape was irrevocably changed by the catastrophe.

2 September

Today, Pudding Lane, in the heart of the City, is most notable for containing a branch of Lloyds' Bank. However, the building in which it is located, Faryners House, hints at the events that befell the street on 2 September 1666. The street acquired its name from the medieval tradition of the "puddings", namely the entrails of animals that fell off the wagons as they made their way between the butchers of Eastcheap (once considered the main meat market of London) and the river Thames; its original name was Offal Pudding Lane.

It was here that the baker Thomas Farriner lived. As with most tradesmen, Farriner's quarters were above his shop and, on the night of 1 September, he headed to bed, as usual, just after midnight. Having neglected to douse a pile of faggots left smouldering by his oven, he was awoken by his servant an hour later to find the house full of smoke and the stove on fire. He quickly escaped.

LANDMARKS ON THE BLAZE'S TRAIL...



The Golden Boy of Pye Corner marks the spot where the fire finally stopped on 6 September 1666



St Paul's Cathedral succumbed to the flames and was later rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren

St. Paul's



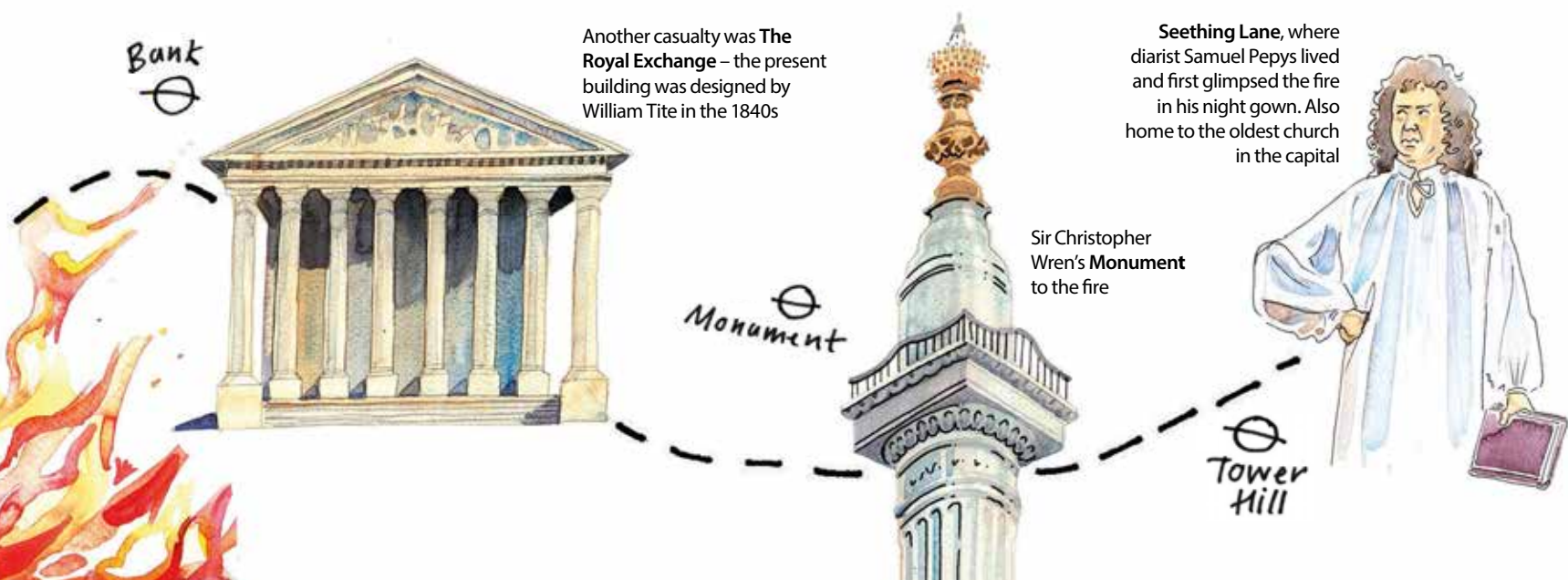
Inset: A portrait of Charles II by Samuel Cooper, 1630-1686. Some believed the fire to be an act of God, sent to punish the King and his courtiers' decadence

By the next day, the inferno had spread. The diarist Samuel Pepys recorded that his maid, Jane, "came up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City". At the time, he thought little of it. The dirty, cramped conditions of Restoration London meant that outbreaks of fire were common, and normally burnt out after a few hours without much incident. Pepys walked to the Tower of London and then to London Bridge to see the flames, soon realising that this was more serious than simply a spectacle; as he wrote, "I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge", making his "heart full of trouble". He himself lived in Seething Lane, close to Tower Hill today, the adjacent street has been renamed Pepys Lane in his honour. His house was not touched by the fire, but by the end of the day, he was reduced to horror, writing: "We stayed till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side of the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it."



Next morning, Pepys sent his "money, and plate, and best things" to his friend Sir William Rider's house at Bethnal Green which, in 1666, was but a rural hamlet in Middlesex, deemed far out of the reach of the fire. As the day wore on, Pepys encountered the Duke of York, Charles II's brother, who "did ride with his guard up and down the City, to keep all quiet", but it was of little use. The aristocrat, Lady Anne Hobart, who lived in Chancery Lane, vividly described the extent of the devastation: "I am sorry to be a messenger of so dismal news, for poor London is almost burnt down." Such landmarks as St Mary le Church and the Painter-Stainers' Hall were destroyed. Famous thoroughfares such as Threadneedle Street were reduced to ash and rubble. No respecter of class, or wealth, fire reduced many of the City's leading citizens to pauperdom within moments. The effects of the fire could be seen as far away as Oxford; the philosopher John Locke, then studying meteorology at the university, noted a "dim reddish sunshine" and a "strange dim red light". It was an ill omen.

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, WWW.IMAGES.RMG.CO.UK; NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY; ILLUSTRATION BY LIS WATKINS, LEMONADE ILLUSTRATION AGENCY



Another casualty was **The Royal Exchange** – the present building was designed by William Tite in the 1840s

Seething Lane, where diarist Samuel Pepys lived and first glimpsed the fire in his night gown. Also home to the oldest church in the capital

Sir Christopher Wren's **Monument** to the fire

Tower Hill

London

4 September

A panicked Pepys prepared to leave his house, but not before burying his stash of wine and much-prized Parmesan cheese in the garden. As Tower Street burnt, he wrote “how horridly the sky looks, all on a fire in the night... enough to put us out of our wits; and, indeed, it was extremely dreadful, for it looks just as if it was at us; and the whole heaven on fire”. That day, the fire dealt its most devastating blow, when St Paul’s was burnt to the ground. Many darkly speculated that it was a divine judgement on Charles II and the sins of the Restoration court. Today, there is little left of the original cathedral, once the largest ecclesiastical building in Europe.

5 September

As flames threatened to engulf the church in Seething Street (All Hallows, ultimately a survivor, remains the oldest church in London), Pepys sent his wife and his gold to nearby Woolwich by boat and returned home, remarking on “the saddest sight of desolation I ever saw; everywhere great fires, oil-cellars, and brimstone, and other things burning”. Few expected London to survive; it was believed that the fire would consume Westminster and Whitehall. Charles II prepared to exit for the safety of Hampton Court.

6 September

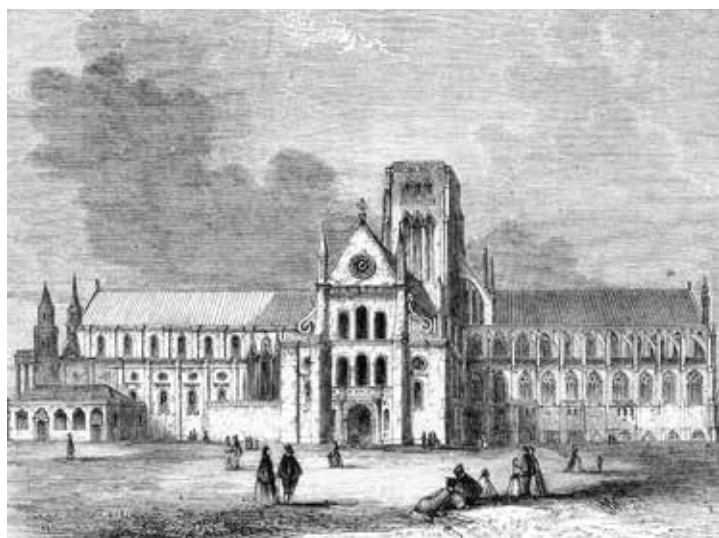
After four days of torment, the blaze ended as suddenly as it began. By sunrise, the Great Fire of London had extinguished itself, leaving

chaos and exhaustion in its wake. Full restoration of the city was not accomplished for three years; the public purse simply did not run to such costly endeavour. Those who could afford to rebuild did so, but there was no homogeneity of design; Sir Christopher Wren’s grand scheme for a coherent post-fire London never came to pass, property owners insisting on keeping the sites of their destroyed buildings. The clergyman Samuel Rolle wrote in 1668 that around 800 houses had been built, calling it “an ill prospect and a ghastly sight”. The only new streets of note were King Street and Queen Street between the Thames and Guildhall. Yet London would grow again.

Today, only a few isolated buildings from Pepys’ London remain. Yet the Monument represents the city’s rebirth, a resilient phoenix rising from the flames. As John Dryden, made Poet Laureate in 1668, wrote in his commemorative poem of 1666, *Annus Mirabilis*:

“Methinks already, from this Chymick flame/I see a city of more precious mold:/Rich as the town which gives the Indies name, With Silver paved, and all divine with Gold./Already labouring with a mighty fate,/She shakes the Rubbish from her mounting Brow,/And seems to have renew’d her Charters date,/Which Heav’n will to the death of time allow.” ■

“Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire and Revolution”, 20 November until 28 March; www.rmg.co.uk; Alexander Larman’s latest book, Restoration, will be published in 2016 by Head of Zeus



Clockwise, from top left: Statue of Samuel Pepys in Seething Lane Garden; first transcriptions of Samuel Pepys’ diary, John Smith, 1825; the Monument, Wren’s 61-metre commemoration of the Great Fire of London; old St Paul’s Cathedral, a casualty of the fire that would later be redesigned as the iconic domed St Paul’s



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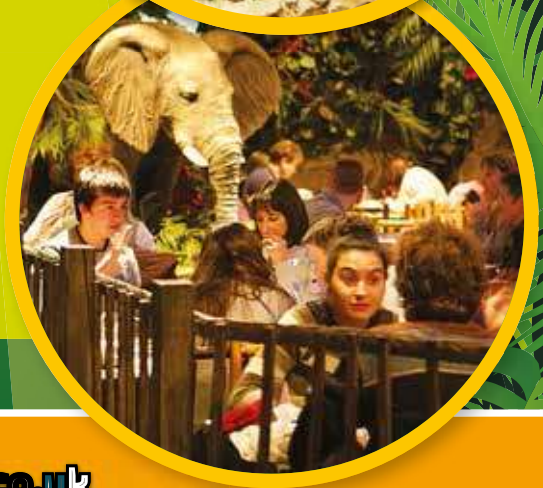
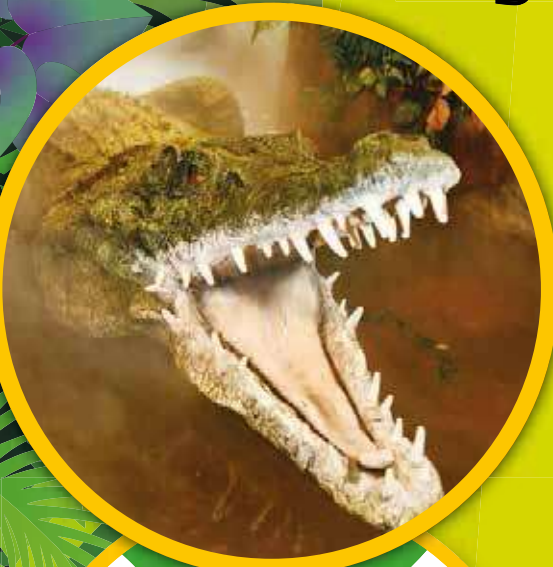
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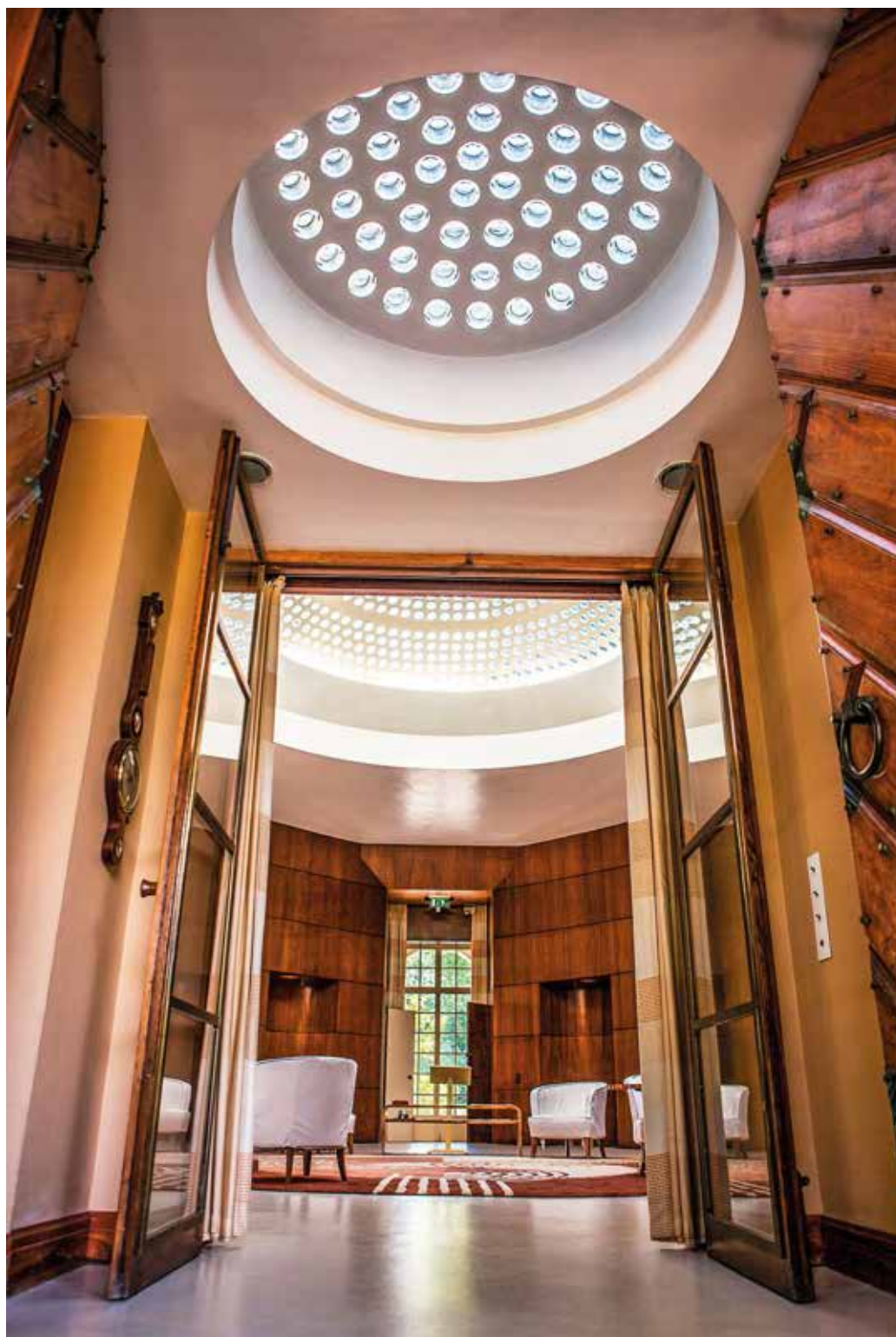
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WHEATHILLS



Secret London

Exhausted the repositories of the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert? Head to Eltham Palace, childhood home of King Henry VIII and now a monument to Art Deco, says **Diana Woolf**. Plus, the capital's top three off-the-tourist trail museums



Eltham Palace can arguably lay claim to having one of the most unexpected afterlives of any English Heritage property. Mentioned in the Domesday Book as belonging to Odo Bishop of Bayeux, half-brother of William the Conqueror, it was acquired by the Crown in 1311, and during the 14th century became one of the largest royal residences in the country. King Henry VIII – then Prince Henry – grew up in its hallowed halls, learning to joust like a master in its tiltyard; it was also in its Great Hall, built by King Edward IV in the 1470s, that the boy who grew up to become the much-married, most famous king in British history would meet and impress the scholar Erasmus, a Dutch Renaissance humanist, teacher, theologian and Catholic priest, who described him as having “a lively mentality which reached for the stars... able beyond measure to bring perfection whichever task he undertook”. Sadly for Eltham, one of the tasks he undertook was to embellish Hampton Court, the “perfection” of his work there eventually rendering his boyhood home no longer a serious competitor. And as Henry’s attentions turned westwards to the riverside palace, neglect set in. By 1656,

diarist John Evelyn noted sadly that: “Both the palace and chapel [are] in miserable ruins.” Indeed, Charles I was the last king to visit; by the Restoration, it was all but derelict.

A new lease of life

Centuries of negligence followed and Eltham’s fate as a romantic ruin, despite its now-derelict walls being rich with history, seemed inexorable. But then, in a strange quirk of fate, the palace caught the attention of the cultured and wealthy Stephen Courtauld. A textiles millionaire in search of a “semi-rural” house, Courtauld took out a 99-year lease on the property in 1933 and employed the architects Seely and Paget (surveyors to St Paul’s Cathedral) to convert it into a highly sophisticated home for him and his Italian wife, Virginia. The result would spell an extraordinary new chapter for Eltham; the Courtaulds bolted on a highly stylised – and highly controversial – Art Deco mansion to the remains of the great palace, creating the bizarre hybrid of medieval remains with 1930s design visitors see today, a masterpiece of 20th century design. One neighbour labelled it “an admirably designed but unfortunately sited

Above, left: The circular entrance hall to Eltham Palace, designed by Rolf Engstromer

Above, right: The moat and grounds of Eltham Palace

Right: The clean Art Deco lines extend to the dining room





cigarette factory.” To others, this was the most advanced house in the country, its interior all film star luxury.

Entertaining the great and good

The Courtaulds were members of an educated elite. Stephen, thanks to his family’s textile fortune, was able to enjoy the life of a philanthropist and supporter of the arts; a serious art collector (his elder brother Samuel founded The Courtauld Institute of Art), he endowed the Royal Opera House and Ealing Studios, as well as awarding an art scholarship to the British School at Rome. And so it was fitting that such a cultured couple should also be generous hosts who lavished only the best Champagne on their company; distinguished guests during their tenure included Queen Mary, the Duchess of York, actress and singer Gracie Fields and composer Igor Stravinsky. Today, visitors to the property are encouraged to experience the house just as one of the stream of ever-present house guests would have done. The scene is set as you walk straight into the extraordinary entrance hall, a dramatic, circular concrete and glass domed cruise liner-inspired space. This was, and remains, the physical ►



and emotional centre, designed by the Swedish architect Rolf Engstromer as an elegant entertaining area complete with cocktail cabinets and smart white sofas. The main reception rooms lead off from the hall – the sumptuous Art Deco dining room, designed by the Italian interior decorator Peter Malacrida, is the most exotic of them. With its shimmering aluminium leaf ceiling, striking black-and-gold doors and mirrored cabinets, the effect is one of unashamed luxury – a far cry from the chintz style popular in so many country houses at the time.

A modern makeover

After the Courtaulds left Eltham in 1944, the property was used by the Army Educational Corps until 1992. Fifteen years after it opened to the public in 1999, English Heritage has given Eltham a £1.7m makeover, rethinking how it is displayed in a bid to better bring both the family and their property to life. “We wanted to show how the Courtaulds used the palace and to make it less staged,” explains assistant curator Lesley Oram. For the new look, several rooms have been opened to the public for the first time...

New rooms

It is the combination of full-blown luxury and cutting edge modernity that makes Eltham Palace so special, a feature underlined by the five newly unveiled rooms. Some historians say that the house was the most advanced in England when it was finished in 1936; the extravagance is most evident in Virginia’s bedroom where, in addition to her opulent en-suite bathroom with gold mosaics and lion mask taps, visitors can now see her cavernous walk-in wardrobe. The glass-fronted, built-in cupboard is beautifully lined with cedar – reputed to repel moths – and full of vintage clothes ready to be tried on.

Upstairs, visitors can also glimpse the adjoining bedrooms occupied by Virginia’s nephews, Peter and Paul Peirano, and their shared bathroom. The latter contains one of the earliest showers to be installed in a private interior, demonstrating how the Courtaulds ensured they had every possible “mod con” in their new home. The newly opened basement underlines this desire for state-of-the-art modernity, as here visitors can see a truly extraordinary contraption: a centralised vacuum

Left, above: Portrait of Stephen and Virginia Courtauld by Leonard Campbell Taylor, 1934

Middle, above: The picturesque bridge at Eltham

Right, above: The Great Hall in the old part of the house

Right: Journals from the 1930s and 1940s





cleaner. Other technological domestic innovations include the house's gas-powered underfloor heating, the central loudspeaker system, electric fires in most rooms and synchronous clocks throughout.

Visitors can also now see the billiards room in the basement, complete with its original table. Along the back wall the Courtaulds reassembled a mural painted in the Renaissance style by the artist Mary Adshead for their Grosvenor Square house; nominally it depicts the legend of St Cecilia, but look closely and you can see Virginia's much-loved, highly fashionable Harrods-purchased pet ring-tailed lemur, Mah-Jongg (the creature had its own quarters, a heated jungle-fresco room; unusual pets were all the rage among the Bright Young Things and "Jongy" remains one of Eltham's best-remembered residents).

Next door is the games room, transformed into a surprisingly comfortable bunker during the war. In spite of the bombing (the medieval hall took several direct hits in 1940) and lack of servants, the Courtaulds continued to entertain during the war and they and their guests would have been forced to shelter here during raids.

Finally, in the map room, where the secretary planned the family's holidays, conservators have discovered a series of maps glued to the wall, with charming decorations painted alongside each one: elephants above India; Britannia guarding Britain; pagodas next to China.

The great outdoors

The gardens were an important part of life at Eltham; flowers were cut for the house regularly (90 vases stored in the flower room testify to the floral fanaticism) and Virginia herself was a keen gardener. The main focus for renovation has been the rock garden laid out by the Courtaulds in accordance with the latest 1930s fashions, now replanted as per its original Alpine scheme.

Despite the money they lavished on it, the Courtaulds spent just eight years at Eltham. The recent renovations have put this tiny period in the palace's history under the microscope, providing a fascinating snapshot of its reinvention as a masterpiece of 1930s design.

www.english-heritage.org.uk



London

The best of the rest: the top three off-the-tourist-trail London museums



LEIGHTON HOUSE MUSEUM

Open to the public since 1929, the Leighton House Museum in Holland Park, Kensington, was built for one of the most famous painters of the Victorian age, Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830-1896) in 1864. The architect George Aitchinson was behind its elaborate Orient-inspired interiors, including a sumptuous two-storey Arab Hall, added in 1879, which looks as though it has been transplanted straight from Morocco. Visitors can explore Leighton's painting studio, as well as the permanent collection, which includes work by Millais and Burne-Jones. www.rbkc.gov.uk



HORNIMAN MUSEUM AND GARDENS

Founded by Frederick John Horniman in 1901 with the wealth that he inherited from his father's Horniman's Tea business, this south-east London museum houses a gloriously eclectic collection of anthropological and natural history artefacts. You can expect to see displays of huge stuffed animals and an aquarium, as well as exhibits of unusual instruments. www.horniman.ac.uk



KENWOOD HOUSE

Hampstead Heath in north London is one of the city's finest and most ancient public green spaces. On its edges sits Kenwood House. First built in the 17th century, the architect Robert Adam later transformed it into a fine neoclassical villa for William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield between 1764 and 1779. Now visitors come to see its art collection, resplendent with paintings by Rembrandt and Vermeer. www.english-heritage.org.uk

HORNIMAN MUSEUM; WILL PRYCE; ENGLISH HERITAGE / CHARLES HOSEA

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Left: The sumptuous first-floor drawing room, perennally set up for afternoon tea
Right: A garret in the attic, otherwise known as The Dickens Room

Still life DRAMA

In 1978, Dennis Severs bought a Georgian townhouse in east London and created an 18th century time capsule.

Nancy Alsop talks to David Milne, its custodian, about Christmases past and keeping the legacy alive



London

T'was the night before Christmas, 25 years ago, and Dennis Severs had lit every last candle on his tree. His house in Spitalfields, east London, was festooned with Victorian cherubs, his table laid with winter fruits, the scene illuminated only by candlelight. When his friend David Milne arrived, he brought with him the only modern interloper to the scene: a small, portable television, an exception made for this one day of the year. "We turned it on," recalls Milne, reclining in a winged chair in the drawing room. "And just at that moment, a curious passer-by knocked on the window, keen to see inside. I never saw Dennis move so fast – he literally flung himself over the television to hide our guilty secret!"

This is just one in a catalogue of happily absurd memories Milne, now the custodian of 18 Folgate Street in Spitalfields, has accumulated around the 30 years he has spent in the house, first as a guest, now as its curator. The late Dennis Severs, a Californian ex-lawyer, bought the property in 1978, having already by then turned his back on the law – and convention – in favour of a more eccentric life, making the money he needed by driving a 19th century carriage around London and telling his passengers stories of the families who had once lived in the grand houses of Mayfair and Belgravia. At that time, Severs lived in Gloucester Road, west London, and it was only when his house there was to be demolished that he discovered a fascinating enclave in the east (today a gentrified destination in its own right).

"Spitalfields was home to a very young and creative community and 30-year-old Dennis was drawn in. So when this now Grade II listed Georgian house was for sale, he bought it to live in – as opposed to as a museum piece. At that time, he saw a 19th century layer on top of an 18th century layer, but he travelled through the rooms and got a sense of what it would have been and could be again, so he bought it from London-based property investment company, British Land, and reconstructed it from the inside."

An aesthete and collector, 18 Folgate Street's newest incumbent began to amass period pieces while eschewing electricity and gas, preferring instead to live by candlelight as previous 18th century inhabitants would have done. A great believer in stories, he channelled the spirit of the age via a family of French immigrant Huguenot weavers – the Jervises – whose characters



Top to bottom: The exterior; a kitchen dresser; the drawing room; a four-poster bed

Milne continues to keep alive through his imagination. "The Jervises were a real family who lived in the area, though not actually in this house," he explains. "Dennis created their story, and gave them aspirations – he visualised Isaac Jervis as having been spirited away from France by his wet nurse while his family was persecuted and slaughtered by the Catholic Louis XV in France. Then, under the care of British relatives, Isaac became a wealthy master silk weaver. Via them, he created these secret tableaux and everything he did felt real because the point at which Dennis stopped and the Jervises began was completely blurred. The thing about it is it's not frozen in time; I helped him paint rooms, and some details aren't historically accurate. For example the overhang in the drawing room is too grand and oversized – but it doesn't matter: it's just wonderful, Dennis loved it. It was emphatically *his* house."

A whispered legend

Dennis Severs' astonishing house soon became something of a whispered legend among the cognoscenti. People knew him from his carriage-riding days and duly followed him to what was then a slummy district of town. Before long, he began to host theatrical tours of his home, for which guests turned up at an appointed hour and were transported through the house on the strict instruction they should remain both with their host at all times and silent. "Occasionally, if there was a spare place, Dennis would ring me up and ask if I wanted to come on the tour, which I usually did. They were always extraordinary, precisely because it wasn't a museum. This was Dennis' house; he didn't have to follow any rules. He would eject people; if you looked shady, you didn't come in. But it was always magical; these tableaux he created came completely alive with sound effects and his narration. Guests would hear horses clattering outside. Or you'd catch voices or the sound of a smashing plate in the next room and then, as you entered, you'd see the responsible broken plate on the floor, or smell a just-extinguished pipe. He would say to his guests at the beginning: 'If at any point you ask me where I live, I will shoot you.' You never quite knew what was going to happen."

Indeed. So impulsive was Severs that he even issued a warning on his website that sensitive souls were more than welcome but that his house did not exist as an entertainment for the bored wives of bankers from Kensington.



“DENNIS WOULD SAY: ‘IF YOU
ASK ME WHERE I LIVE, I
WILL SHOOT YOU.’ YOU
NEVER QUITE KNEW WHAT
WAS GOING TO HAPPEN”





“We could not – and would not – ever do that now,” says Milne. “But I can understand why he did. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were a lot of disparaging snobs who derided the house because it was not historically accurate. They forgot it was his home – they just came to sneer. And they missed the point: the love and joy that has been lavished upon the place.”

Many more, happily, approved. The painter David Hockney, for one, ranked it as great “opera”, while David Milne understood it better than anyone. “Dennis and I were friends. I have been a regular at this house since I was 20 – I spent every Christmas here when Dennis was alive – and I will be 50 this year.” Those Christmases were legendary. Milne would arrive on the 23rd, laden down with food (and once in a while, that television set); the house would be abuzz with preparations; on Boxing Day, the neighbours would all come in. And then on New Year’s Eve, there would be a huge party, after which they would all go to a rave, and then bring people back to the house. “I would go on ahead and light the fire and toast muffins over the open flames, so these people would get the surprise of their lives walking into this amazing scene – they would never want to leave!”

“DENNIS SAID OF THE HOUSE, ‘YOU EITHER SEE IT OR YOU DON’T.’ I GUESS I JUST ALWAYS SAW IT”

In the case of Milne – a set designer by training, who has worked with Harrods, Selfridges and Liberty as well as the Royal Opera House – leaving just never quite happened. “I think Dennis involved me in the house because I never questioned it,” he says. “It is complete creation, and I treat it as if it was all real. He said of the house, which is entirely instinctive and mood-driven, ‘You either see it or you don’t.’ I guess I always saw it.”

Severs was perceptive enough to know that appreciation for what he’d done would likely be posthumous. He always said: “When I am dead, they’ll like me.” He was right; having passed away 16 years ago, the house has since been hailed as a living work of art. “Before he died, Dennis gave an interview saying he thought that the house might be ephemeral and would not survive after his death. My taking over was unspoken. I sat with him and told him I would take it on. He said: ‘I can’t ask you, and I can’t tell you what to do, but I know whatever you do will be right.’ I understood it had to be made more professional in order to survive, but I now know that, barring environmental disaster, this house will be here in 100 years.”

The numbers of people coming to see the place have swelled, not diminished, in the intervening years. Every Monday and Wednesday sees the inquisitive filing in, many of whom, says Milne, are visibly moved by the ►

London

experience. “I have had people leave with tears in their eyes. It is a place that stirs up emotions, for all of us. I felt very moved by a delightful American family who came last year with their 20-something-year-old son, who was completely blind. I suggested they arrive early and I told him the whole story, I got him to touch everything – you could never do that in other historic properties. It is a very sensual place – the smell of the fire, of the fruit, the sound of the clock ticking, the horse and carriage... Later I got a letter saying it had been his best Christmas ever.”

Christmases past

The house has form when it comes to making merry. “I love Christmas and so did Dennis. In the morning, we’d have breakfast together and exchange presents. He would always give me something like an 18th century sherry glass that had been broken and put back together. He knew I created stories, and I always liked the pieces that had been broken – if people had gone to the trouble of fixing them, that told me that they must have been precious. Everything he gave me is here – when I die, people would probably throw away broken things like that if they were left in my flat; here, they will remain.”

Every year, Milne runs festive tours of the house, when it is festooned with decorations and permeated with the scent of Christmas; exclusive tours are also available. This year, however, Milne’s gift to 18 Folgate Street (amid the myriad of auction-sourced additions) is currently a work-in-progress; with the help of a sound engineer, he is planning to patch together tapes of Severs’ original tours to bring the voice of the man back to Folgate Street. With or without them, Milne has done a brilliant, impassioned job of keeping his spirit alive these 16 years. ■

Silent Night Christmas tours on selected dates between 30 November and 6 January; visit www.dennissevershouse.co.uk for details



STAY ON FOLGATE STREET

While visitors to number 18 Folgate Street cannot put the Jervises out by staying the night, they can repair next door to the Batty Langley's Hotel, named after a 17th century drawing master who published books to aid builders plan Georgian houses “in the most Grand Taste”. Mr Langley's influence is evident all through this delightfully idiosyncratic hotel. Guests will find no identikit rooms here; each is individual, some with 17th century carved oak beds, others with Georgian four posters.

Baths are of the roll-top variety, and showers are restored vintage, while the interiors are sumptuously dark and brooding. Eccentric yet luxurious, a stay here is like being invited into a private home where your hosts just happen to be bend-over-backward accommodating. A fitting addition to a delightfully quirky street.

Batty Langley's, 12 Folgate Street, London E1 6BX

www.battylangleys.com

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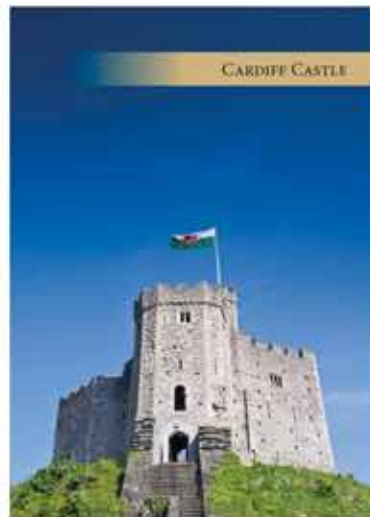
Enjoy several days in the engaging capital of Edinburgh, and the largest city, Glasgow before heading to the Scottish countryside, with stops at Loch Lomond and Stirling Castle to our destination at Stonefield Castle, a place that typifies the warmth and elegance of a bygone era. Relax in gracious, wood-paneled lounges, and enjoy ample time to explore the estate's 60 acres of woodland grounds. An evening of Scottish music and dancing, a guided tour through the history of mid-Argyll, mouth-watering feasts and Christmas Eve services at the local church round off a timeless Christmas experience.

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APRIL 28 - MAY 7, 2016

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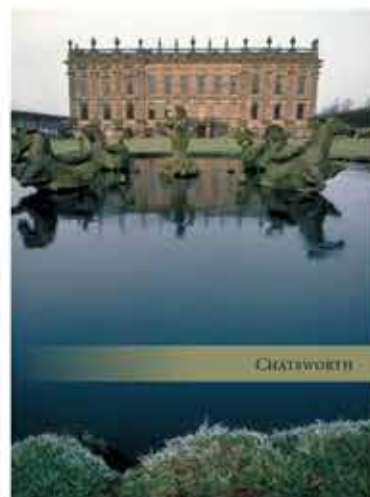


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The Peak District National Park covers 555 square miles right in the centre of Britain straddling the Pennine Mountain range, known as the "backbone of England." Created in 1951, it was the first National Park and remains remarkable for its natural beauty and its proximity to the country's industrial heartland.

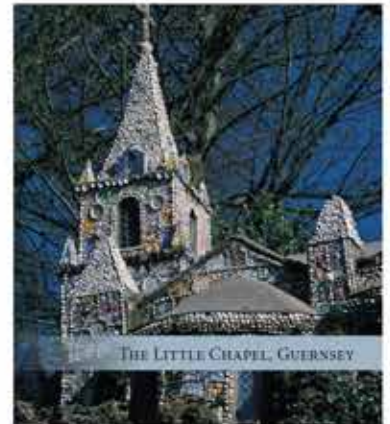
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The Insider

Brenda Cook spills London's best secrets for the clued up tourist and asks... did you know?



YES, PRIME MINISTER

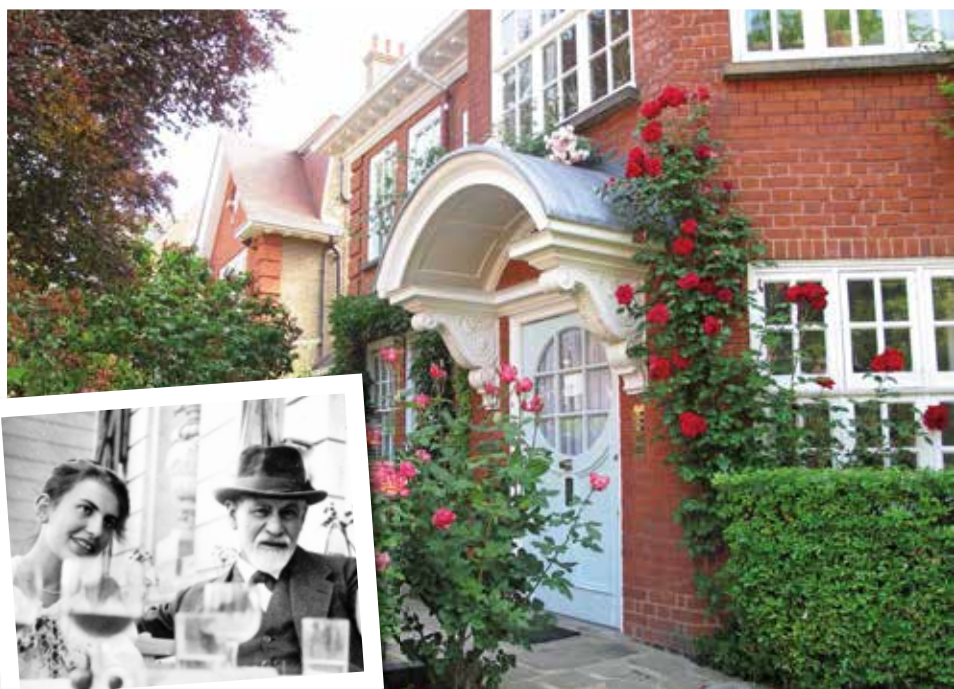
Surely the most famous door in the world, Number 10 Downing Street is more a look-from-afar affair, as opposed to a tourist site. But did you know that, handily, there is a near-exact replica at Number 10 Adam Street, just off The Strand? Just the place for a cheesy snap.



THIS HOUSE BELIEVES

You've alighted at Westminster and marvelled at the 1840 edifice of architects Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin's Gothic Revival masterwork: the Houses of Parliament, officially known as the Palace of Westminster. But did you know that you can listen in on history being made (or perhaps just schoolyard-style bickering) by attending public debates, free of charge, from Monday to Thursday and on Sitting Fridays? The most popular is Prime Minister's Questions, for which overseas visitors must queue on the day, while UK residents can request free tickets from their local MP. www.parliament.uk/visiting

SHUTTERSTOCK: ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA / JUSTIN BARTON



FREUDIAN SLIP

Hampstead has long been associated with giants of the intellectual, artistic and literary worlds. And Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis, was perhaps king of them all. But did you know you can visit his Hampstead home and step into a world belonging to Sigmund and Anna, his youngest daughter? The house at 20 Maresfield Gardens was home to the Freuds after they fled Nazi-occupied Vienna; these days the public can clap eyes on the couch upon which Freud's patients famously reclined. www.freud.org.uk



SUITS YOU

Savile Row springs to mind immediately when it comes to dapper gents' attire. But did you know that a short walk south to Jermyn Street stands Emma Willis, which is every tailored inch as stylish, while offering a voguish edge (*Vogue* itself eulogises its "inimitable English style")? Shirts, ties, and boxers are made in Gloucester while, back in London, the shop is all drawing room elegance and bespoke service. Emma Willis has now launched online; perfect for luxury presents (think cotton dressing gowns and cashmere socks). www.emmawillis.com



LOCK 'EM UP

The Tower of London tops every must-see list when it comes to visiting the capital, and small wonder: it is home to the Crown Jewels; the princes in the tower were – on instruction from their uncle King Richard III as legend has it – murdered here; and even Elizabeth I was incarcerated within its stone walls before she became queen. Housing all those riches – literal and historical – it's no surprise the Tower takes its security seriously. But did you know that you can book tickets to watch The Ceremony of the Keys, the traditional locking up of the tower, which has taken place every night, without fail, for the past 700 years? www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon

PUNCH LINE

Punch cartoonist Edward Linley Sambourne (1844–1910) was not only a talented satirist; he was also a prominent proponent of the Aesthetic Movement. The latter is evidenced by his home at 18 Stafford Terrace, Kensington, these days under the auspices of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. But did you know that visitors are now granted open access on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, as opposed to having to pre-book? To celebrate, a series of evening tours, led by actors characterised as members of the Sambourne family, will be available from October to December. www.rbkc.gov.uk/museums



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SEE ADJACENT CARD FOR OVERSEAS RATES AND HOW TO ORDER



LIBERTY FOREVER

As London department store, Liberty, celebrates 140 years since its legendary doors opened, the Fashion and Textiles Museum pays homage to an icon. **Rose Bateman** talks to exhibition curator Dennis Nothdruff





Liberty is the chosen resort of the artistic shopper.” One of his more memorable quips it may not have been, but few were more finely attuned to the tastes of London’s high bohemian society than Oscar Wilde. Indeed, for his fellow aesthetes – including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederic Leighton and James McNeill Whistler – Liberty & Co was *the* shop, its fashions a reliable signifier of being a paid up member of the Aesthetic Movement in all its decorative romance. And, as the decades rolled on, its place at the forefront of every fashionable movement gained strength, its chameleonic ability to reinvent itself through Art Nouveau and Art Deco to the 1960s and beyond remaining legendary.

It all began in 1875, when Arthur Lasenby Liberty, a draper’s son, opened his own shop at 218a Regent Street, after having borrowed a sizeable £2,000 from his future father-in-law. It was a far cry from the half-timbered icon that now constitutes Liberty’s home 140 years later and continues to draw tourists, while ingeniously remaining one of Londoners’ treasured pride and joys.

Lasenby Liberty began by selling Oriental imports – hand-printed coloured silks – from his first shop, East India House, the original expression of his vision to create an eastern bazaar in England, selling objects and fabrics of the east to a society intoxicated by the Orient.



Above left: Arthur Lasenby Liberty **Right:** Advert for Liberty, 1924



Below left: Dress by Arnold Scaasi, 1961, using “Eustacia” **Right:** “Constantia” fabric, 1961

Soon, the small but ambitious operation gained momentum, acting as a meeting place for cutting edge artists. The loan was repaid in six months, securing happy relations with his future wife’s family. He set out his stall with the words: “I was determined not to follow existing fashions but to create new ones.”

The forward-motion never slowed; Lasenby Liberty worked with Costume Society founder, Edward William Godwin, to produce collections to rival fashions emerging from Paris, while Liberty’s magnificent mock-Tudor edifice in Great Marlborough Street was constructed in 1924 from the timbers of two great ships: the HMS Impregnable and the HMS Hindustan. Lasenby Liberty did not,

sadly, live to see the completion of his new mother ship, but his legacy endured. The 1920s gave rise to the small-yet-distinctive floral “Liberty print”, still synonymous with the store today; the 1960s brought collaborations with designers de jours, Mary Quant, Jean Muir and Yves St Laurent; and its star shows no sign of dimming, evidenced by “Liberty in Fashion”, the exhibition at the Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, celebrating 140 years of Liberty & Co. In the words of one of the many dedicated followers of its fashions, shoe designer Terry de Havilland: “As evening fell all the lights came on. I’d never seen anything like Liberty before. It reminded me of a huge galleon with all the windows ablaze with light.” ➤





The rich and beautiful
interior of Liberty
Far left: "Eustacia" and
"Hera" print impressions



Above: A hansom cab outside Liberty
Front page: Liberty's mock-Tudor edifice; "Bengal" print impression

Meet the curator: 10 minutes with Dennis Nothdruff

"Liberty in Fashion" marks 140 years of Liberty. What has been its overarching contribution?

Liberty believed that good design and truth to materials should be accessible to all. It was the marriage of the ideals of Arts and Crafts with innovative retailing and a dedication to production.

How did all this veer from the sartorial norms of the day?

Liberty's original fashion ideas came from the textiles and garments he was importing from the Far East and the inspiration of the Aesthetic Movement. The results were looser, less reliant on decoration and much less structured than the prevailing styles of the Victorian era.

Though steeped in tradition, Liberty remains avant-garde...

Liberty has always maintained its own identity. It has been this continuous dialogue with idealism, tradition and

innovation that has kept Liberty at the forefront of British retailing.

The floral prints are the most enduring of all the textiles... why have they remained so ingrained?

Liberty florals, many introduced in the early 20th century, became a mainstay of the business in the 1920s and 1930s. They provided a continuity with history and a perceived "Britishness" and were a less challenging option than the Modernist designs then in vogue.

Liberty became fashionable fast, with followers from Oscar Wilde to Whistler. What was it that these bohemians responded to?

Arthur Liberty became friendly with the artists, writers and designers of the Aesthetic Movement before he established Liberty & Co. These relationships were an inspiration for the young entrepreneur and their ideas informed Liberty's tastes.

What have been the defining moments in Liberty's history?

There are so many: the importing and dissemination of oriental goods; the development of its costume department in the 1880s; Tana Lawn and Liberty florals; the building of the Tudor building in the 1920s; Liberty's rediscovery by designers of the 1960s and 1970s and its impact on fashion. ■

Liberty in Fashion, 9 October – 28 February; www.ftmlondon.org





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London



1 CAROLS AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

It's not Christmas until you've drunk quantities of mulled wine before belting out a carol or two. There is no shortage of services and concerts in the capital – many ticketed with proceeds going to charity – but nowhere beats St Paul's Cathedral for sheer grandeur. Advent carol services by candlelight at Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece kick off on 28 and 29 November; there's a family carol service on 19 December; and Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Oh come, all ye faithful.

Tube: St Paul's; www.stpauls.co.uk



2 TRAFALGAR SQUARE CHRISTMAS TREE

No Christmas in London is complete without a visit to the biggest tree in the capital. The towering 20-metre Trafalgar Square beauty has been gifted to the city every year since 1947; our Norwegian benefactors in Oslo each year donate a 50- to 60-year-old spruce, which also acts as a focal point for carol singers. Early December until 6 January.

Tube: Leicester Square

2 THE NUTCRACKER, ENGLISH NATIONAL BALLET

Few stories are so rich with the magic of Christmas as *The Nutcracker*. The English National Ballet stages a special production at the London Coliseum this season, as 100 dancers take to a frost-dusted stage to tell the story of Clara, who battles the Mouse King and escapes with her Nutcracker in a hot-air balloon over Edwardian London to the Land of Snow. Picture perfect.

Tube: Leicester Square; www.ballet.org.uk



London's festive TOP 10

Rose Bateman rounds up the top ten not-to-be-missed Christmas crackers in the capital

4 GEFFRYE MUSEUM, HOXTON

This quirky museum in east London specialises in the history of the British home. Visitors can wander through the decades and centuries – and never is it more fascinating than during its “Christmas Past: 400 Years of Seasonal Traditions in English Homes”, at which you can trace customs, from parlour games to decorating the tree. 24 November until 3 January.

Overground: Hoxton; www.geffrye-museum.org.uk





5 ICE SKATING AT SOMERSET HOUSE

One of the most picturesque wintry additions to the urban landscape is the spate of outdoor ice rinks that pop up around the city as a chill hits the air. Our favourite of all is at the central courtyard at Somerset House, just off The Strand, the neoclassical home of the Courtauld Gallery. As its appearance in the opening credits of *Love Actually* attests, gliding (or flailing) across the ice here feels like stepping onto a film set. Tube: Temple; www.somersethouse.org.uk

6 THE PETER PAN CUP AT THE SERPENTINE LAKE, HYDE PARK

Christmas amblers should ensure that the pre-lunch walk takes in Hyde Park, where the annual Serpentine Swimming Club's Christmas Day swim in the Serpentine Lake takes place. A tradition since 1864, the plucky bathers take to the waters at 9am, and the winner takes home the Peter Pan Cup, in years gone by presented by JM Barrie himself. Bracing. Tube: High Street Kensington; www.serpentineswimmingclub.com



GRAHAM W LACDAO; ALAMY; 2014 ARNAUD STEPHENSON; GEFREY MUSEUM, LONDON; RBG KEW

7 WINTER WONDERLAND, HYDE PARK

From late November until early January, Hyde Park ceases to serve simply as one of London's best parks; it becomes a magnet for the truly crackers for Christmas. Expect German-style festive markets, circus performances, a Magical Ice Kingdom (think ice sculptures, a frozen lake and an ice queen), and a big wheel. From 20 November to 3 January. Tube: Hyde Park Corner; www.hydeparkwinterwonderland.com

8 WINTER CINEMA, THE BERKELEY, KNIGHTSBRIDGE

At Christmas, even the most hard-to-please film buffs rejoice in the same old childhood movies. Watch in style at The Berkeley's rooftop Winter Cinema, with a hot water bottle and luxurious Moncler blankets. Our film of choice? *It's a Wonderful Life*, naturally. Nearest tube: Knightsbridge; www.the-berkeley.co.uk



9 CHRISTMAS AT KEW GARDENS, KEW

Kew Gardens should teeter at the top of any London destination list all year round. But, at Christmas, it takes special to another level. Santa's Snowflake Grotto will feature, as will vintage fairground rides, but what makes this transcendently magical is the seasonal makeover, which sees buildings and planting trails light up. Also expect a choir of holly bushes and a scented fire garden... Tube: Kew; www.kew.org

10 CHARLES DICKENS MUSEUM, HOLBORN

No one is more synonymous with Christmas than Charles Dickens. The tale of Ebenezer Scrooge has provided a timely morality lesson since it was published in 1843; and there are few more fascinating places to visit at Yuletide than the author's Georgian town house. The museum holds special events at which it serves up mulled cider by candlelight. Tube: Russell Square; www.dickensmuseum.com





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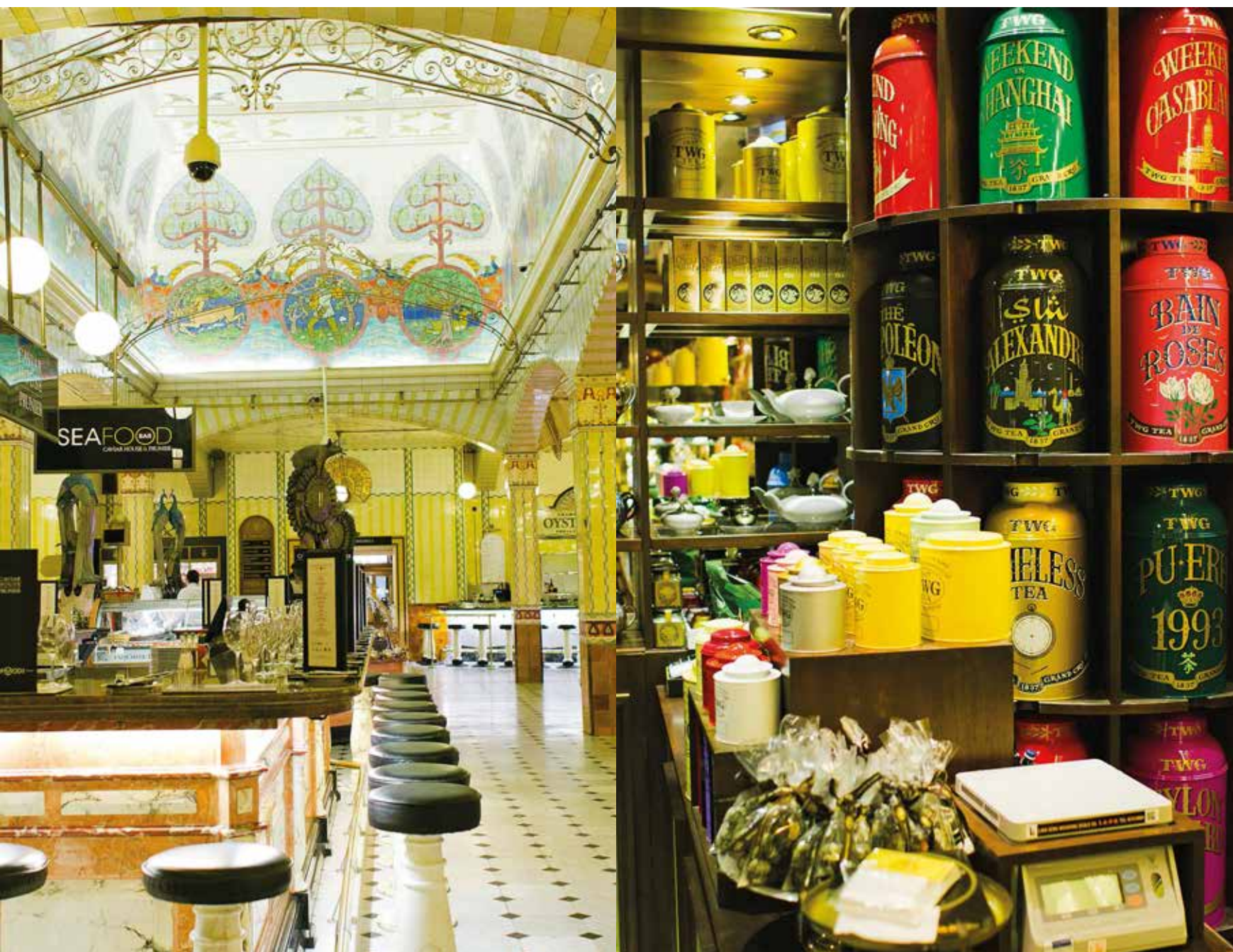
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Halls of Fame

When Charles Henry Harrod opened a grocery store in 1834, he could scarcely have imagined it would one day become a global icon. **Nancy Alsop** gets a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the Food Halls and meets Food and Beverage Director, Bruce Langlands

Photography by **Alicia Pollett**



The façade of Harrods, twinkling like a Christmas tree by the light of 12,000 bulbs on the south side of Knightsbridge, is a sight so familiar that it resonates as much as an icon of London as Buckingham Palace. It's certainly as imposing; set over seven floors, it covers five acres, every inch heaving with luxury goods, while the inventive window displays beckon shoppers in by dint of their glitz and high drama.

It's all a far cry from the grocery store and teashop that Charles Henry Harrod set up in east London in 1834. The former miller sold his wares in Stepney, a far-flung area of east London known more for its poverty, violence and overcrowding than for luxury department stores and, eventually sensing his limitations, in 1849 fatefully rented a small premises on Brompton Road, Knightsbridge. There, his apples and pears turned over a modest £20 per week. Had the director of the diminutive operation been gifted the power of foresight, he would likely have been more astonished than anyone at the monolith Harrods would become.

For, unbeknownst to Mr Harrod, Knightsbridge was on the cusp of becoming, in 1851, the most fashionable area of the city. Proceeds from the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace in the same year, attended by six million people, were used to found both the Victoria and Albert and Natural History museums, just down the road from Harrod's new Brompton Road site. These new cultural attractions did

wonders for footfall. In the 1880s, by which time Harrod's son had long taken over, the store upgraded from simple grocers to a veritable cornucopia, selling meat, fish, wines and spirits.

A relic of its abounding success is still to be found on the lower ground floor in the form of a miniature silver replica of the store, gifted to Harrods in 1927 after Gordon Selfridge lost a friendly bet as to which of the two department stores would make the most profit that year. As the trophy testifies, Harrods was the firm victor.

Its origins as a grocer account for the fact that the opulent Food Halls (plural; over the years they have expanded to seven, the complete article officially opened in 1982 by Princess Anne) at the Harrods we know today, built in 1905, remain the heart of the store. Its motto, "Omnia Omnibus Ubique" ("All Things, for All People, Everywhere"), is nowhere more apt.

At 7.30am on an autumnal Wednesday, Mr Harrod would be gratified to see his shop abuzz with activity; its success no longer reliant on the overspill of hungry museum visitors, but on its own towering reputation. Hundreds of straw boater-adorned staff scurry industriously to deck the halls; delicate cake displays are laid out; lobsters submit to splay decoratively on

Front page: Harrods' luxurious Food Hall displays

Left: The sublimely presented pâtisserie

Right, clockwise: Fishmonger Andrew labels his catch; exquisite terrines on display; Celina prepares Harrods' daily bread; seafood in the Food Hall; Camille on the Traiteur counter



London

ice; and the butcher fillets and bones with deft precision. That these are happy workers is self-evident; having been at their stations since the crack of dawn to ensure the theatre that is Harrods runs without a hitch, they are still smiling, mostly, you sense, because their rigorous culinary education has taught them to care deeply about provenance and perfection. Harrods' Gourmet Food Academy trains new recruits for nine months in all aspects of the Food Halls.

And small wonder; they are under the tutelage of Bruce Langlands, Food and Beverage Director at Harrods since 2010, who, during his tenure, has trained the spotlight more than ever on sourcing the best ingredients. "My team works with producers to ensure that Harrods products are different from the competition," he explains. "Take our cheeses, for example. We not only provide the best quality, but also exclusive vintages. The bestselling 36-month matured Marcel Petite Comté is only stocked at Harrods."

The Food Hall had long constituted a magical land of plenty for Langlands. "I knew Harrods well, as it was always top on the list of places to visit for comparative shopping trips to London. My first visit was in 1982 on a school trip from Edinburgh. The Meat and Fish Hall amazed me, from the Doulton hand-painted tiling through to the amazing types of fish, meat and game, many of which I had never seen before." ➤

Far right: A display of teas and preserves
Right: Alexandro checks his seafood catch
Below, left to right: An illustration of the Market Hall in 1911; the Grocery Hall with its original arrangement of counters in 1953; the introduction of self-service in 1971





“A customer requested a very specific bespoke present for their nephew: a chocolate rocket that an eight-year-old child could sit in. In 24 hours, we were ready to make the request a reality”



Above, left to right: Paul, the butcher, at his counter; a display in the irresistible Chocolate Hall
Below, inset: Bruce Langlands, Harrods' F&B Director

Thanks to Langlands, visitors can catch seasonally changing high-profile resident chefs (wunderkind Ollie Dabbous has had a starring role and, from October, Tom Kerridge, chef-patron at the Michelin-starred Hand and Flower in Marlow, will take up residency with his comfort food menu).

Langlands has been richly rewarded for his work, not least in the extraordinary things that happen daily in the rarefied world of Harrods. "Memorable moments happen every day," he says. "One that comes to mind was when the store was transformed for the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Many brands created crowns which we featured in our front windows. I thought: 'Only at Harrods could this happen.' Another was when a customer requested a specific bespoke present for their nephew because they had missed his birthday: a chocolate rocket an eight-year-old child

could sit in. In 24 hours we were ready to make this request a reality."

It is that abiding spirit – that only the best will do – which has ensured Harrods remains the most famous store in the world. I leave Langlands ruminating on Christmas, the time of year that this very special store reaches its apotheosis. "The theme this year is shimmer, sparkle and magic. The Harrods Exquisite range for Christmas features an advent calendar using our finest couverture, and hand-picked tea from Harrods' Bari Estate in Darjeeling. We always hope to surprise and, this year, our "hybrid" lines put an imaginative twist on classics."

Were Charles Henry Harrod able to wander through his legacy today, he would no doubt think that all his Christmases had come at once – no matter the time of year. ■

www.harrods.com



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An aerial photograph of a vast, dense forest. The trees are mostly green, with some showing early autumn colors of yellow and orange. In the lower right, a small, light-colored building with a dark roof and a small tower or cupola is visible, partially obscured by the trees. The background shows rolling hills under a hazy sky.

DOWNTON COUNTDOWN

This Christmas marks the finale of Julian, Lord Fellowes' *Downton Abbey*.

As we say farewell to one of the most watched shows of all time, **Jessica Fellowes**, author of the drama's companion books and Lord Fellowes' niece, picks her top *Downton* moments. **Plus**, a location guide to the series





When the first episode of *Downton Abbey* aired in September 2010, I watched it in anticipation as a proud niece but I had no idea it was about to change all of our lives. My uncle, Julian Fellowes, had written the scripts and told me that he was excited about this new show and how he hoped it would do well. None of us could have predicted the extraordinary phenomenon that was to come – today the series is Britain's most successful television export, watched by hundreds of millions around the world, from Michigan to Melbourne. Nor did I know that I would go on to write five companion books to the show, exploring the real-life inspirations from our family and social history, which led to a public speaking career here and in the US. Here, I look back on the ups and downs of those above stairs and below at *Downton Abbey* and pick my favourite moments...

The arrival of Matthew and Isobel Crawley

This, for me, signalled the moment we recognised that Violet, our dowager countess, was the perfect combination of hauteur and wit. Based on Julian's great aunt, Isie Stephenson, they shared, he says, "a mixture of kindness and severity of heart". This was perfectly illustrated in Violet's response to Isobel's enquiry as to how they should address each other: "We could always start with Mrs Crawley and Lady Grantham."

Violet on a swivel chair

Violet visits Matthew Crawley at his office, to see whether he will investigate the legal possibilities of fighting the entail, which means that he inherits and her own granddaughter cannot. Her dignity is momentarily put asunder when

she almost topples off a swivel chair, invented by Thomas Jefferson, prompting the brilliant line: "Why must every day involve a fight with an American?" It's also Jim Carter's (who plays Carson) favourite scene – he rewound it several times.

The death of Kemal Pamuk

This was the moment that the frosty, ambitious, arrogant Lady Mary was nearly undone by the sudden death of her Turkish lover. Based on a true story that Julian heard years before he had even thought of *Downton*, it is a seminal moment and the ramifications for Mary went on for years. It is a wonderful example, too, of Julian's writing – a single plot that spewed many tiny threads, which he continued to pick up on over several series. When you are writing for as many central characters as he is, that is quite an achievement.



When Edith is jilted at the altar

Or rather, just after – a moment between mother and daughter, when Cora tries to make Edith feel better about this frankly terrible, humiliating event. Cora says, “You are being tested. And do you know what they say, my darling? Being tested only makes you stronger.” To which Edith replies: “I don’t think it’s working with me.” This also happens to be one of Julian’s favourite lines. Poor Edith – the question I am most asked is if Julian will let her be happy. Fingers crossed.

Robert announces the start of war

This is another true-life moment, based on my grandfather’s earliest memory. He was two years old and sitting in a pram at a garden party when a man came out and read ➤





from a telegram that Britain had gone to war. Julian asked his father how he could have remembered it, and he said he supposed the change in atmosphere must have been so great even a baby could sense it. Knowing the heavy sadness that was about to hit them, I never failed to be moved.

The revelation of a romance between Prince Kuragin and Violet

Violet's racy past was revealed in the fifth series when she admitted to Isobel that she had nearly eloped with Prince Kuragin when she was a young wife, seduced by the beauty and glitter of the Russian palaces. I think something the audience has adored about the show has been the sprinkling of romance, whether above stairs or below, young or old.

Mary wrestles in the mud

After her new pigs arrive, Mary and Charles Blake, with whom she has had a prickly relationship, are up most of the night giving them water,

and getting muddy. It was funny in itself, bringing Mary down to earth. But it was a horror to film as it was a night scene shot during the day, so it had to be done in a blacked-out barn in the summer. Knowing this kind of behind-the-scenes detail changes one's perspective and is something I love finding out about.

Mrs Hughes and Mr Carson walk into the sea together

Our final shot of the fourth series was the housekeeper and butler holding hands and going for a paddle – you could practically hear the nation rejoicing. But before we saw the fifth series, I interviewed Phyllis Logan and Jim Carter and asked them: “Is this the beginning of a romance?” “It could be,” said Jim dryly, “or a suicide pact.”

Mrs Patmore's tactless bedside manner

In the third series, Mrs Hughes has a scare when she finds a lump. Without

any family, she is forced to turn to Mrs Patmore, with whom she had mainly exchanged harsh words about keys to the pantry at that point. Mrs Patmore is fabulously tactless when it comes to sympathy: “If you must pay money, better to a doctor than an undertaker”. Mrs Hughes replies: “If that's an example of your bedside manner, Mrs Patmore, I think I'd sooner face it alone.”

Edith takes back Marigold

Another Edith moment, but she has been my favourite character all along; partly because she represents the plight of so many women after the war whose expectations of life were turned completely upside down in the aftermath, and partly because, although Julian chucks the most terrific obstacles in her path, she has the imagination and determination to overcome them every time. I thought the drama of her reclaiming Marigold, when our hearts were torn apart as much for Mrs Drewe as for her, was *Downton* at its very best. I shall miss it. ➤



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Downton Abbey

ON LOCATION: Tour the places that star in the show. *By Sally Hales*



ALNWICK CASTLE

Alnwick, dating back to 1096, is an old-hand when it comes to welcoming the cameras. The Northumberland fortress, the second largest inhabited castle in Britain – second only to Windsor Castle – has featured as Hogwarts in the *Harry Potter* movies; in *Elizabeth* with Cate Blanchett; and in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* with Kevin Costner. And so, when it came to doubling as the fictional Brancaster Castle, home of Lord Sinderby, one can only imagine that it was nonchalant about its stardom. www.alnwickcastle.com



JEFF GILBERT / ALAMY; WWW.VISITOXFORDANDOXFORDSHIRE.COM; NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES

HIGHCLERE CASTLE

The first port of call on any *Downton* trail must, of course, be the seat of the Earl and Lady of Grantham: the Abbey itself, otherwise known as Highclere Castle. Visitors can tour the Hampshire property – set amid Capability Brown gardens – on designated dates between 60 and 70 days a year. The imposing Sir Charles Barry-designed Jacobethan building, rebuilt on the site of an earlier medieval palace of the Bishops of Winchester, is today home to Lord

and Lady Carnarvon, who live in it during the winter only. As well as touring the rooms in which so many memorable scenes were filmed, visitors can also clap eyes on Egyptian artefacts; the 5th Earl of Carnarvon, an amateur Egyptologist, accompanied Howard Carter on his mission when he unearthed the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922, and brought back various trophies from his expeditions. www.highclerecastle.co.uk



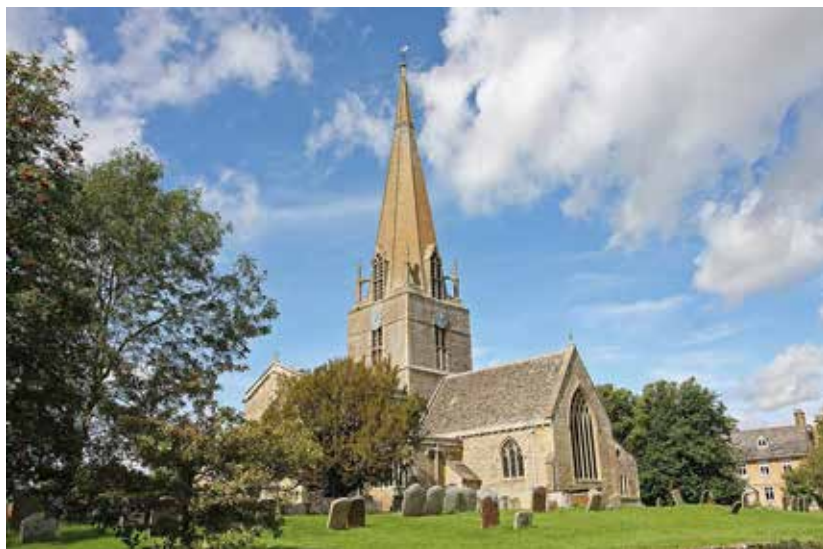
GREYS COURT

Greys Court in Oxfordshire is a National Trust-owned Tudor country house, with beautiful courtyard gardens, complete with a fortified medieval tower dating to 1347. The property serves as a pretty picnic spot for the Granthams, though their visit is not entirely in the name of halcyon pleasures. Greys Court doubles as Downton Place, supposedly near Durham in the north of England, second home to the Earl and Lady Grantham and the place to which they consider relocating should they be forced out of Downton. www.nationaltrust.org.uk



COGGES MANOR FARM

Cogges Farm, in Witney, Oxfordshire, boasts 1,000 years of history. Wadard, Lord of the Manor of Cogges, features in the Domesday Book, and was shown as a Norman knight on horseback in the Bayeux Tapestry. Now a museum, having been converted in 1979, it stars as Yew Tree Farm in series four and five, where Lady Edith's secret child is brought up by the Drewe family.
www.cogges.org.uk



BAMPTON

Visitors to Bampton in the Oxfordshire Cotswolds may find themselves in strangely familiar territory, even if they are further south than they may have expected. The pretty village doubles as the fictional hamlet of Downton, supposedly in Yorkshire. Its Church of St Mary has provided the scene for many dramatic episodes, including weddings, christenings and a jilting.
www.cotswolds.info

BASILDON PARK

Basildon Park is a National Trust property in Berkshire, south-east England. Its day-to-day life sees it open to the public, who come to tour the Georgian mansion, restored by Lord and Lady Iliffe in the mid-1950s. Its starring role, however, came in a Christmas special, when it doubled as Grantham House, the family's grand "London" residence.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk



THE SWAN INN

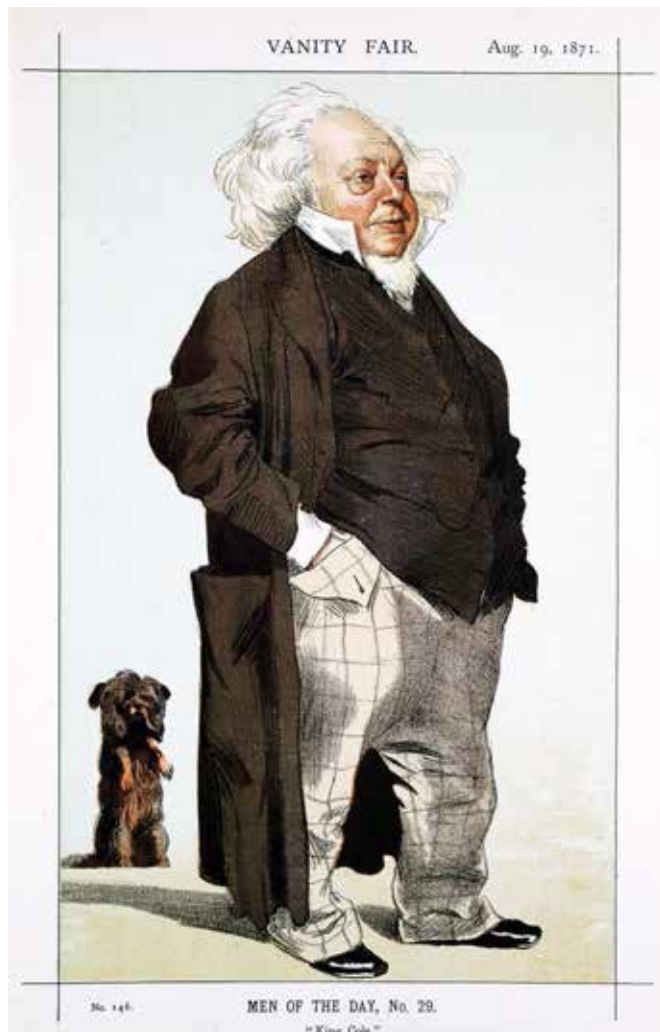
This Oxfordshire inn has known its share of well-known faces. Not only did the famous Mitford sisters grow up at Swinbrook (the youngest, "Debo", the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire owned the pub latterly), but it was also the spot where Lady Sybil and the chauffeur Tom Branson resolve to elope together.
www.theswanswinbrook.co.uk

THE CRITERION

Established in 1874, the Criterion has known its fair share of brushes with the literary and the literal A-list. The restaurant on Piccadilly, London, is where Arthur Conan Doyle set the scene of the first meeting between Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson; and where Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George thrashed out their political agendas. It also added to the pantheon of illustrious guests Lady Edith Crawley and Michael Gregson. It is here she tells him that pre-war, she would never have eaten at a public restaurant, and later agrees to marry him.
www.criterionrestaurant.com



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Good tidings

What would Christmas be without cherub-adorned cards thudding on to the doormat daily? **Alexander Larman** traces the history of the tradition back to one enterprising Victorian civil servant

Each year, gift shop shelves groan under the weight of festive cards, all competing to wish us a happy Christmas and new year, often as dementedly early as September. But did you know the tradition, like so much of Christmas as we know it, can be traced back to those sentimental Victorians? While German families exchanged religious greetings on card as far back as the 17th century, and British children were encouraged to write messages to their family, it took one man to popularise – and commercialise – the merry institution.

The chap in question? One Henry Cole, a Victorian civil servant who invented the

card as we know it. Innovative to his core – he is also credited with inventing one of the world's most famous stamps, the Penny Black, and with being the first director of the Victoria and Albert Museum – he consulted an artist friend, John Horsley, and decided that together they could monopolise the 1840 “penny post” (on 10 January that year, the Uniform Penny Post was established throughout the UK, meaning that any item of mail could be sent for the princely sum of a penny). Cole and Horsley, sensing an opportunity, designed a lavishly engraved card, at the cost of one shilling, that depicted a typical well-to-do family's feast. That it featured a grateful child

thirstily tucking into a glass of wine (causing outrage among some puritanical Victorians) did little to detract from one fact: that this was the trailblazer for the contemporary Christmas card.

Although the duo produced just under 1,000 cards, they proved popular. They continued to circulate in small numbers until around 1860, when the price of manufacturing dropped, putting Christmas cards within ordinary people's reach for the first time. At the cost of a half-penny, festive greetings could now be sent to friends or family anywhere in the country.

Cole was nothing if not shrewd. He became close to the Royal Family and,





THE DAVID PEARSON COLLECTION / MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

by interesting them in sending seasonal greetings, ensured that Queen Victoria and her family became avid card senders; many servants at Balmoral were annual recipients of highly decorative personalised missives; on the few occasions these appear at auction today, they fetch up to £25,000 each.

As cards became more mainstream, prominent artists began to see them as an effective and lucrative vehicle for distributing their work to the masses; Royal Academicians, GD Leslie and George Clausen were among those who turned their hands to greetings cards.

Poetry too found its way into the humble card, many of which contained short,

improving pieces of verse. The market for these little poems was so great in England towards the end of the 19th century that the Poet Laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson, was offered a thousand guineas to come up with a dozen all-purpose verses that could be used inside the cards. Fearing that his poetic reputation would suffer (he was, after all, the author of *The Charge Of The Light Brigade*), he reluctantly refused.

Others had no such scruples. Queen Victoria's favourite poet, Helen Burnside, cornered the market almost entirely (typical example: "*So many the card I send thee/In some hereafter Christmas prove/A happy memory of me*"). It is believed that she

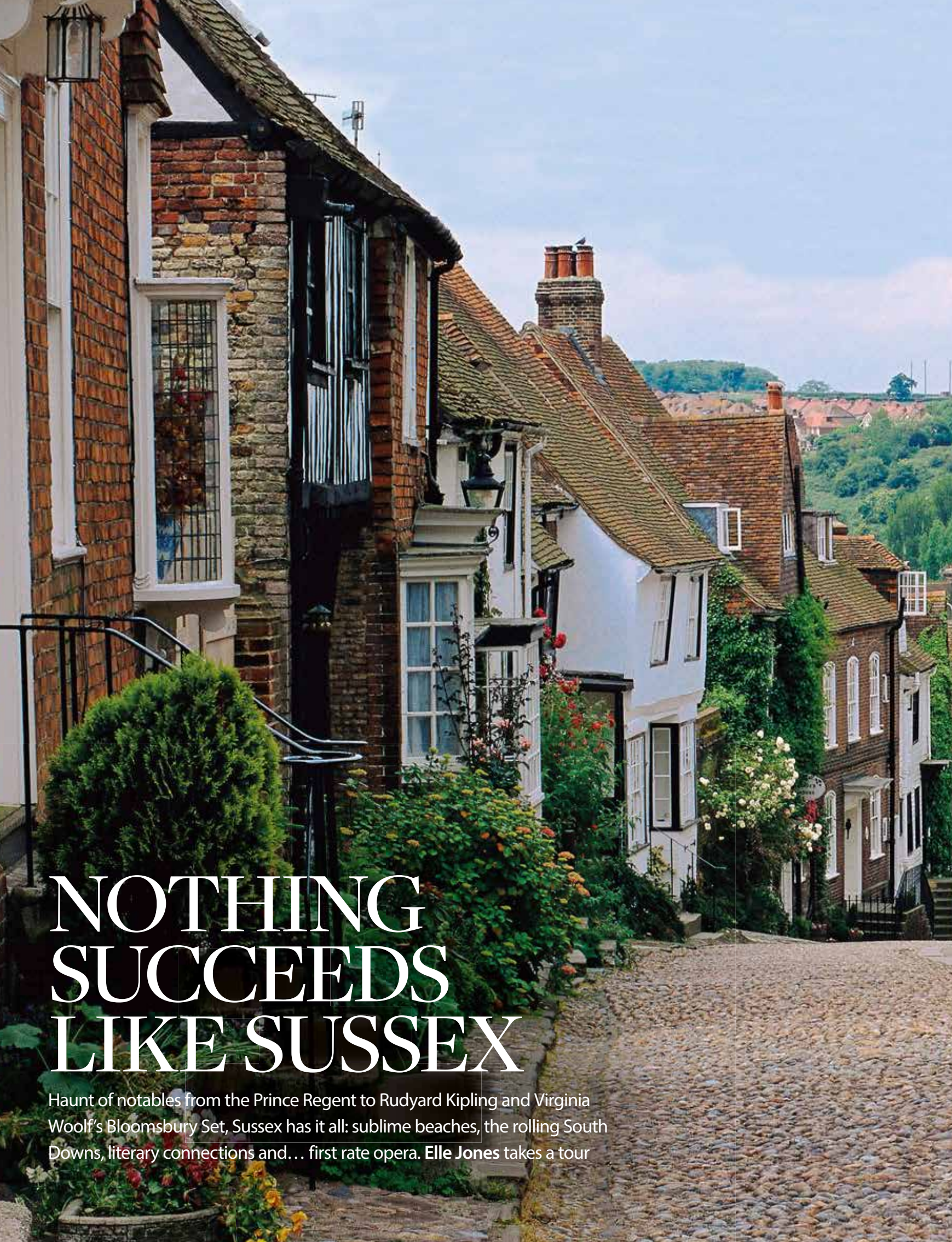
Far left: A portrait of Henry Cole

Left to right: Typical examples of Victorian cards

Bottom right: Cole's first Christmas missive

wrote as many as 6,000, making her an extremely wealthy woman and earning her the nickname: "the Poet Laureate of Christmas cards".

By the early 20th century, 11 million Christmas cards were sent annually in Britain alone; now that number is more than a billion. Today, in the era of instantly available e-cards, the essential pleasure in sending and receiving cards remains timeless and, for this, we should be eternally grateful to Henry Cole, who enabled so many to spread the Christmas joy. ■



NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUSSEX

Haunt of notables from the Prince Regent to Rudyard Kipling and Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury Set, Sussex has it all: sublime beaches, the rolling South Downs, literary connections and... first rate opera. **Elle Jones** takes a tour

A street scene in Sussex featuring a mix of brick and half-timbered buildings, ivy, and flowers. The image shows a narrow street with a cobblestone road and a sidewalk. On the left, a building is covered in green ivy, with a hanging sign that reads "Mermaid Inn". A black lantern is mounted on the ivy. To the right, a brick building has white-framed windows with flower boxes containing pink and purple flowers. A large bush of red poppies is in the foreground. A purple circle with the word "SUSSEX" is in the top right corner.

SUSSEX

ROYAL PAVILION

Built as a seaside pleasure palace for the Prince Regent (later King George IV), the Royal Pavilion at Brighton is a glorious oddity. Construction started in 1787, and its influences from the Far East are evident in its lavish domes, the work of architect John Nash. From pleasure to pain, the pavilion served as a hospital during the First World War, but is now part of Brighton's museum.

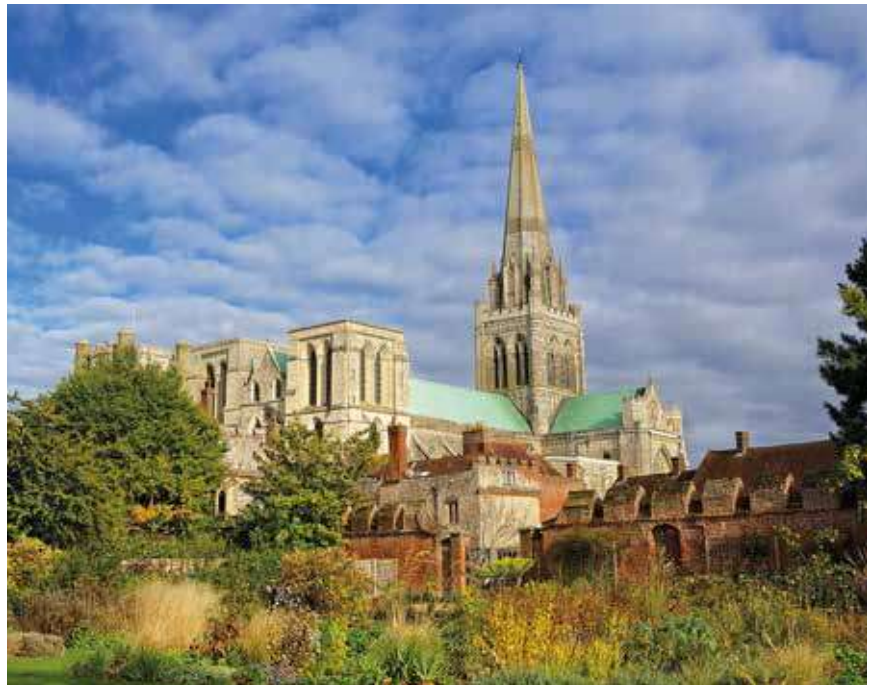
www.brightonmuseums.org.uk



GLYNDEBOURNE

Recognised globally as one of the great opera houses, Glyndebourne, East Sussex, takes place in what was founder John Christie's back garden. Launched in 1934, it is now run by Christie's grandson, Gus, and remains a family affair. An English institution, opera lovers flock to it each year from May to August, after which productions tour the UK. The drama takes place inside but, for many, the real draw is picnicking in black tie in the exquisite grounds during the long interval (there are restaurants, but where's the fun in that?)

www.glyndebourne.com



CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

No trip to West Sussex is complete without stopping at Chichester Cathedral, the 900-year-old Norman and Gothic seat of the Anglican Bishop of Chichester. Do ensure you clap eyes on some of its treasures, which include a window by Marc Chagall and a tapestry by John Piper.

www.chichestercathedral.org.uk



GOODWOOD

Goodwood in West Sussex is all about the races – whether that’s of the motoring variety, courtesy of its Festival of Speed and Goodwood Revival (think classic cars and vintage clothes), or of the four-legged equestrian type. There is also a golf course in the grounds of Goodwood House, one of the UK’s great stately homes. But there’s no need to be a sport buff or a motor head here; it’s as much about picnicking and drinking champagne in the beautiful grounds as anything else.

www.goodwood.com



SOUTH LODGE

Arriving at South Lodge in Horsham, West Sussex, the first thing you see is a grand Victorian country house made grander by carefully sympathetic contemporary additions. Every luxury detail is accounted for (think pillow menus in the room), while the Michelin-starred The Pass restaurant offers an intimate gastronomic experience, seating just 24.

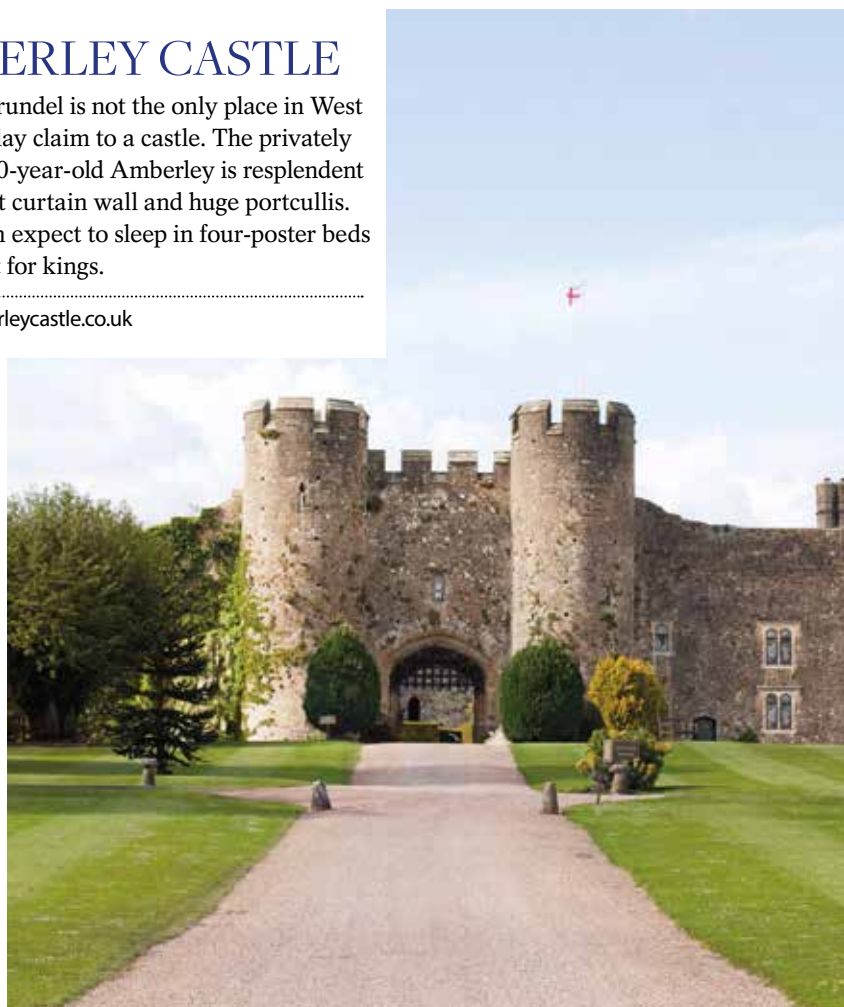
www.southlodgehotel.co.uk



AMBERLEY CASTLE

Nearby Arundel is not the only place in West Sussex to lay claim to a castle. The privately owned 900-year-old Amberley is resplendent with a 60ft curtain wall and huge portcullis. Guests can expect to sleep in four-poster beds that are fit for kings.

www.amberleycastle.co.uk





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A G HENDY

Alastair Hendy started out as a food photographer and chef. Now his name is revered in both interiors and foodie circles. That's because, in the heart of Hastings Old Town, he spent years stripping back one of the town's historic buildings to a state of perfect austerity. Next, he filled it with homewares so practical yet beautiful that design magazines lavished pages on its brilliance. And then he opened a restaurant, which is all Dickensian atmosphere allied with distinctly non-Dickensian, seafood-heavy contemporary food.

www.homestore-hastings.co.uk

SALT ROOM

Brighton's seafront has long languished as a relic of bygone glories. But the tipping point has come in the form of one exceptional restaurant: The Salt Room. Situated opposite the West Pier, the interior is all exposed brick and raw sensibilities, and the only thing that outshines the décor is the food. Under head chef Dave Mothersill, surf and turf reigns. Try the lobster with charcoal mayonnaise, and finish with A Taste of the Pier, involving doughnuts, ice-cream and... pebbles. Intrigued? You should be.

www.saltroom-restaurant.co.uk



RESTAURANT TRISTAN

Housed in a 16th century building in Horsham, West Sussex, the oak beams constitute all that's old about Restaurant Tristan. Everything else – its food offering, its interior – feels distinctly fresh, new and innovative. And the Michelin guides agree; under the leadership of its head chef, Tristan Mason, it has garnered one of those sought-after stars. Do try a tasting menu, on which sublime dishes such as quail with lime and lemongrass feature.

www.restauranttristan.co.uk

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www.sussexpast.co.uk

VISIT



CHARLESTON

The painters, writers and thinkers known as The Bloomsbury Group (Duncan Grant and Virginia Woolf among their number) often swapped the London square after which the set was named in favour of Sussex. Charleston, near Lewes, East Sussex, was the rented home of Clive and Vanessa Bell – and their semi-permanent guests. The public can tour the beautiful bohemian house and garden, perfectly preserved as it was then, with stencilled walls and library collections.

www.charleston.org.uk



RYE & CAMBER SANDS

At the easternmost tip of East Sussex sits Rye, the enchanting medieval town that was once home to authors Henry James and E F Benson, the latter of whom set his *Mapp and Lucia* books in the Cinque Port town. Cobbled streets, a Norman church and charming independent shops characterise the place, and the most picturesque (and vertiginous) vista is afforded from Mermaid Street. While you're visiting, do head to the seaside at Camber Sands, its sandy expanse extending for miles.

www.ryesussex.co.uk

NYMANS

When a fire ravaged Nymans Estate, high on the Sussex Weald, in 1947, it left a portion of the house a shell. Now the part-ruined gothic drama of it all makes it a distinctly romantic, fairytale place. Bought as a family home in the 1800s by a German banker, Ludwig Messel, the house – and specifically the gardens – became his obsession. Happily preserved, Nymans remains a place of horticultural dreams.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nymans



BATEMANS

"That's She! The Only She! Make an honest woman of her – quick!" Those were the words of Rudyard Kipling (Nobel-winning scribe behind *The Jungle Book*, *Kim* and the *Just So Stories*) when he first clapped eyes on Batemans, the 17th century house set amid the wooded landscape of the Sussex Weald. Its mullioned windows and oak beams – all of which remain untouched, along with Kipling's rugs and artefacts, many hailing from his beloved India – are now entrusted to The National Trust.

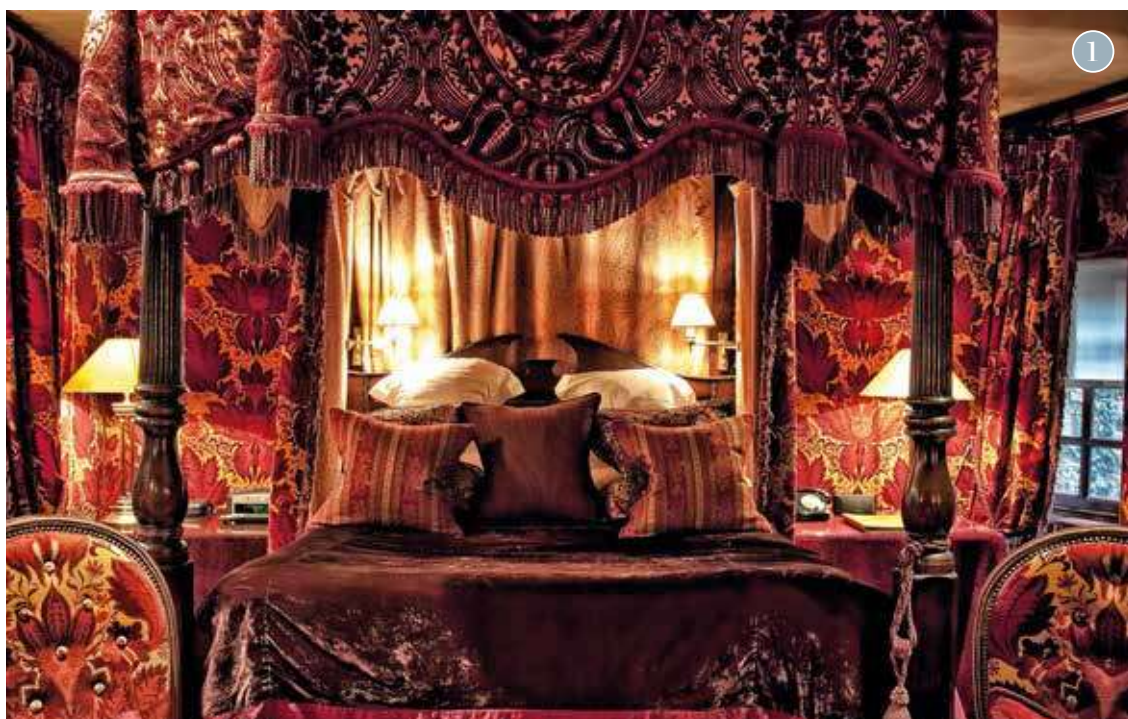
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/batemans





2

- 1: A Gothic bedroom at The Witchery
- 2: The inviting library at The Pig
- 3: The Felin Fach Griffin's warming Aga
- 4: Great Fosters is set amid 60 acres
- 5: The Olde Bell and its Ilse Crawford-designed rooms



1



Winter warmers

As the mercury drops, **Jo Baxter** rounds up the best hideaway hotels in which to hole up by the fire this winter

WIN a night at The Witchery by the Castle with Champagne and dinner for two! Visit discoverbritainmag.com to enter and for full terms and conditions

1 The Witchery by the Castle

Edinburgh

In the shadow of Edinburgh Castle sits a hotel that can claim a fame almost equal to the great fortress itself. Its interior is an antidote to the minimal good taste that abounds in so many hotels; its Gothic style is enriched by the jewel-coloured velvets that adorn almost every surface and the eclectic details recall nothing so much as a very wealthy Catholic church. Romantic and dramatic, you'd be not only forgiven, but encouraged, to forgo stepping outside to spend time in this fascinating repository of theatrical interiors.

0131 225 5613; www.thewitchery.com

2 The Pig

Hampshire

Robin Hutson is the man behind The Pig, a burgeoning series of hotels that has garnered such a following insiders talk of stays here in almost reverent tones. Relaxed to its core, there are log fires inside and out; food comes from within 25 miles of the Georgian house; communal areas are designed to invite you to curl up on the abundant sofas; and dining takes place in the most beautiful conservatory you ever saw. We still love the original Pig in Hampshire; there is nowhere better to hole up and munch on its famous "Piggy Bites".

01590 622 354; www.thepighotel.com



3

3 The Felin Fach Griffin

Hay-on-Wye

The Black Mountains and the Brecon Beacons form the beautiful backdrop for this humble and homely pub with rooms. This is the kind of place where dogs are actively encouraged, wellies and Barbours constitute acceptable dinner attire and a toasty Aga provides the warm welcome to chilly ramblers. Winter is the perfect time to take a pew at the pub and dig into the sustainably sourced food, which comes courtesy of gardener Joe Hand, who supplies almost all the exquisite food from the hotel's own garden.

01874 620 111; www.felinfachgriffin.co.uk



4



5

4 Great Fosters

Surrey

Just down the road from Runnymede, where Magna Carta was sealed some 800 years ago, sits a highly luxurious 465-year-old upstart in the form of Great Fosters. Now a 43-room hotel, royals including Queen Elizabeth I and King George III are purported to have visited during their reigns, while the ancient moat pre-dates even Magna Carta, hailing from 500 AD. These days it is all cosy comfort, with roaring fires, four-poster beds, fine dining, afternoon teas and oak panelling. It is also the ideal place from which to take a day trip to nearby Windsor.

01784 433 822; www.greatfosters.co.uk



5 The Olde Bell

Berkshire

Hurley, where this charming hotel is located, is a quintessential English village on the Thames, just a short amble from Marlow. Until 2008, it boasted one inn of little note. Since then, its position has been elevated by a fantastic renovation courtesy of Ilse Crawford, who brought understated Danish design chic to the 900-year-old building. Cosy throws, Roberts Radios and roll-top baths adorn the lovely rooms, while no stay here would be truly complete without taking a fireside pint in the ancient inn.

01628 825 881; www.theoldebell.co.uk



6: Hotel Endsleigh is a former hunting lodge
7: The Elizabethan Langshott Manor
8: Gurnard's Head is a rambler's retreat
9: The West Loft Suite at Number 38
10: A sumptuous room at The Rookery
11: Lainston House's drawing room

6 Hotel Endsleigh

Devon

Once the fishing and hunting lodge of the Duke of Bedford, Grade I-listed Hotel Endsleigh has these days been repurposed as a retreat for grateful urbanites in search of total relaxation. It combines historical design details – the gardens, woodland, follies and grottos are all courtesy of the great 18th century landscape designer, Humphry Repton – with modern luxury, thanks to contemporary designer, Olga Polizzi. There are 16 cosy yet capacious bedrooms, a wood-panelled dining room – and views that go on and on into neighbouring Cornwall.

01822 870 000; www.hotelendsleigh.com

7 Langshott Manor

Surrey

This breathtaking Elizabethan manor was once home to the Governor of the Bank of England. And well he might have chosen to retreat here, given its exquisite gardens, its ancient moat and its atmospherically dusky interiors, with their mullioned windows and 16th century features. The Mulberry restaurant represents a perfect example of English fine dining with wholesome ingredients and seasonal fare. Fires roar throughout the hotel, while the cosy bedrooms are either named after King Henry VIII and his six wives, or local castles.

01342 859 702; www.alexanderhotels.co.uk

8 Gurnard's Head

Cornwall

Set between the artists' Mecca of St Ives and the beautiful St Just, the Gurnard's Head is a pub with rooms in the hamlet of Treen which boasts a serious view. The rugged coastline makes it a dramatic and enticing spot for walkers – which, in turn, ensures that the tongue-and-groove dark interiors and roaring fires are even more inviting for those wishing to curl up in its warm embrace. While there, be sure to sample the exemplary local ales and hearty Cornish fare via its short, but exquisite, menu of simple food.

01736 796 928; www.gurnardshead.co.uk



9 Number 38

Bristol

For one of the major cities of the south, Bristol long languished without any serious contenders on the boutique hotel scene. When Number 38 opened, that all changed. The double-fronted Georgian townhouse, teetering on the edge of Clifton Village, the most sought-after area of town, offers just ten bedrooms, all of which are individually styled. We love the West Loft Suite which, with its dark Farrow and Ball-painted hues and freestanding bath, is as broodingly stylish as it is womb-like; the perfect place to curl up in comfort for days.

01179 466 905; www.number38clifton.com

10 The Rookery

London

The Rookery is reminiscent of nothing so much as a private members' club. Its polished wood panels, its 33 idiosyncratic rooms – which are all different from one another – its Georgian detailing and uneven floors all contrive to make it the perfect place for the well-heeled traveller who prefers to steer clear of the obvious. The hotel's dark palette and sumptuously appointed rooms offer its guests the perfect excuse to go nowhere else – although, should you be inclined to activity, Smithfield market is right on the doorstep.

020 7336 0931; www.rookeryhotel.com

11 Lainston House

Hampshire

A 17th century country house set amid 63 acres of parkland, Lainston House, near Winchester, is the ultimate spot for stepping not only away from the bustle, but also back in time. It is easy to imagine the days of bonnets and bustles amid the perfectly manicured gardens, the 12th century chapel ruins and the dovescote. But every modern comfort is also catered to, from the sumptuous rooms to the luxury bathrooms. Winter is the perfect time to eat in the wood-panelled dining room – or simply to read by the fire.

01962 776 088; www.lainstonhouse.com

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BRITAIN'S FINEST





Making of a masterpiece

Inside Dyrham Park, the Gloucestershire stately home and parkland that the industrious civil servant William Blathwayt built on the site of a Tudor manor. By **Nancy Alsop**

There can be few people through history to have worked for so many British monarchs as William Blathwayt (1649 – 1717).

An industrious civil servant, and grandson of a prolific London merchant, he served, mind-bogglingly, no fewer than four reigns: those of King Charles II, King James II, William and Mary and finally Queen Anne.

For his loyal service, Blathwayt was richly rewarded. His range of posts was remunerated handsomely (most notably for his work as Surveyor and Auditor General of Plantation Revenues, as a result of which, governors in the Caribbean and American

colonies lavished him with gifts and money, angling in return for acceleration of business dealings in London). And nowhere was this earned wealth put to better use than at the 270-acre Dyrham Park.

The Gloucestershire mansion, located between Bristol and Bath and now open to the public under the auspices of The National Trust, is sublimely situated amid parkland; a magnificent 17th century stately home rising from the verdant sweep of deer park, construction of which Blathwayt began in 1692. It was a project that would be augmented over the course of his life.

Despite obstacles, Blathwayt proved a

canny operator. Although he was raised by a hapless uncle, Thomas Povey, who had been sacked for incompetence as Treasurer to the Duke of York during the Restoration, his nephew nonetheless gripped tight to the not-quite-yet-closed door to public office. He was clever to do so. He succeeded Povey and made a considerable success of his role; he was, variously, a diplomat in the Hague; Auditor-General of the colonial revenue; under-Secretary of State to Lord Conway; Clerk on the Privy Council; he established the charter of the Crown Colony of the Province of Massachusetts Bay; he promoted trade in America; he ascended ➤

Gloucestershire



to Secretary at War under James II; and he became a Whig MP for Bath.

Neither was his judicious decision-making confined to his public life; he also happened to make an advantageous marriage. The dexterous businessman met and married Gloucestershire heiress Mary Wynter in 1686. Upon her tragic death only five years later, she left Blathwayt with three children. Her other legacy? The inheritance of Dyrham estate, at that time comprised of a small Tudor manor house and parkland.

Status building

In spite of the remunerative rewards for his work, Blathwayt's social status was never elevated to that of a nobleman, which meant only one thing: he had to express

his position of power through the grandeur of his house. In 1571, the Wynters bought the property, whose deer park was first mentioned as the site of a battle in 577AD. (Its name comes from the Saxon "deor hamm", meaning "deer enclosure".) A naval family (John Wynter sailed with Francis Drake in 1577), they were staunch royalists who had clung onto the property through the Civil War, despite Oliver Cromwell's best efforts. And it was to Blathwayt's distinct advantage that they did.

But he was nothing if not ambitious. The original house, though historic, was not grand enough for his tastes. In the early 1690s, he appointed French architect Samuel Hauduroy to build a new west front; in 1698, when Blathwayt's purse was

better endowed, architect William Talman (assistant to Sir Christopher Wren and architect of Chatsworth House) built an east wing that would be grander still. Meanwhile, the diplomat's time spent in the Hague found expression in a Dutch-inspired garden; there were fountains, parterres, a cascade said to be second only to one at Chatsworth, statues and even a canal, all designed to compete to show off Blathwayt's wealth. Inside the house, the Dutch influences continue to abound; Dyrham remains a repository for Dutch artwork, the apotheosis of which is the work of Samuel van Hoogstraeten, a fashionable painter of tromp-l'oeil still life, employed at Dyrham to execute a witty view down a corridor painting at the end of a literal view down a corridor. ➤

Previous page: The east
front of Dyrham Park
Left: The west front
This page: A corridor
featuring the painting *A
View Down A Corridor* by
Samuel van Hoogstraeten





The garden and
view of the stables



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Dyrham Park has proved adaptable over the years. By the 1790s, Blathwayt's contrivances were out-of-kilter with the fashions of the day; duly, the formality of the gardens was replaced with a looser, less structured scheme, executed by the prolific landscape designer Humphry Repton. Today, a statue of Neptune is the only surviving relic of Blathwayt's original Baroque garden.

The house remained under the care of the Blathwayts until 1952. Its fluctuating fortunes saw a 1844 rescue mission by Colonel George Blathwayt who interceded after the wife of William Crane Blathwayt had left its entire contents to her own family. He raised the considerable £50,000 necessary to buy it back. In 1938, Dyrham was rented to Lady Islington, the widow of a local MP, who merrily painted original panels, moved the library and chopped and changed fireplaces like clothes. Happily, the National Land Fund bought the property in 1956, thus saving this masterwork for the nation.

"His Utere Mecum" remains Dyrham's motto ("Share all this with me"). It is an invitation that remains fitting as an appreciative public wanders its grounds, exactly as instructed by Blathwayt himself. ■

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyrham-park



A close up of a decorative mirror and side table in the drawing room

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3 Highgrove store

The abundant produce from Highgrove, Prince Charles' Gloucestershire estate, can be snapped up through its shop. The land incorporates Duchy Home Farm, which supplies the organic goods, while royally approved craftsmen make the homeware. Do book a tour of the gardens while you're there. www.highgroveshop.com

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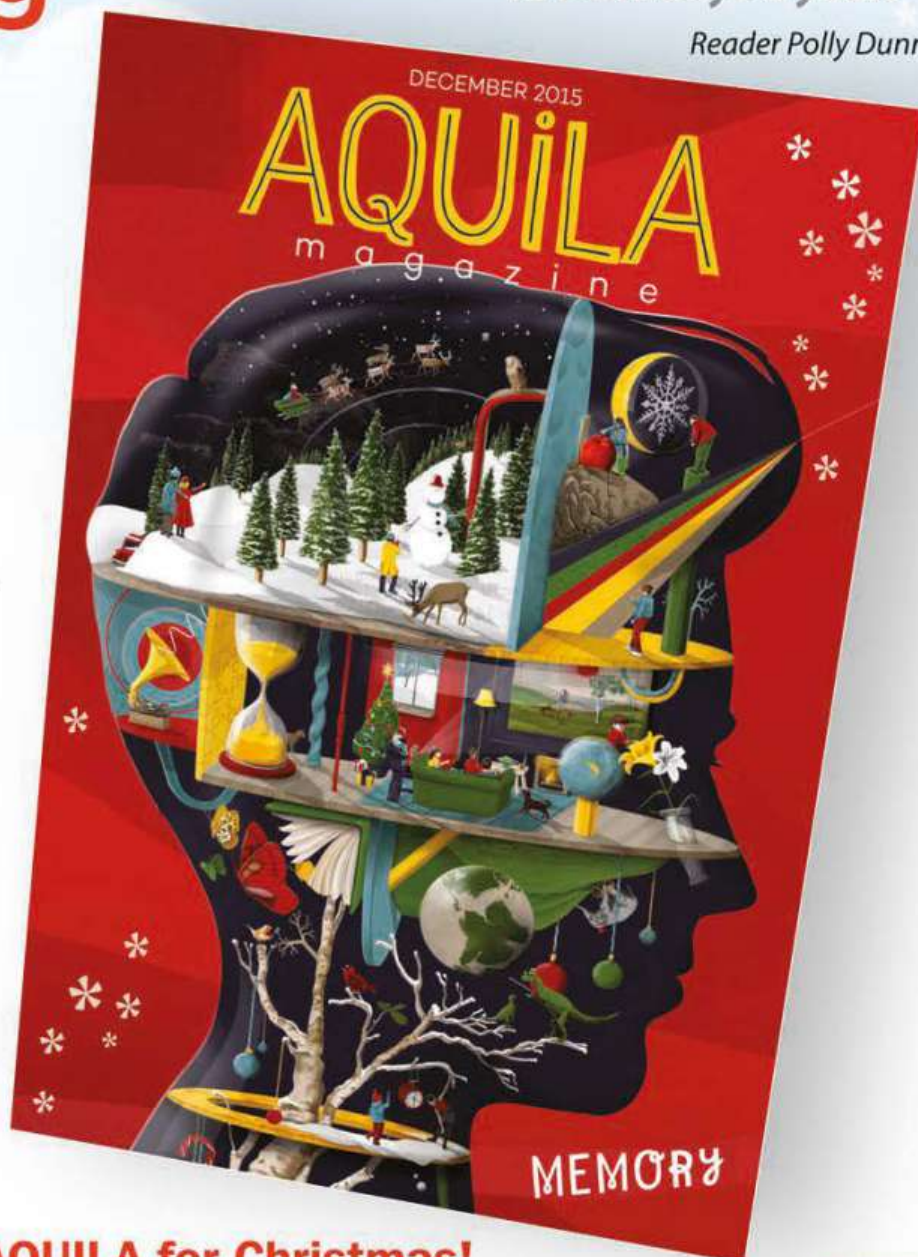
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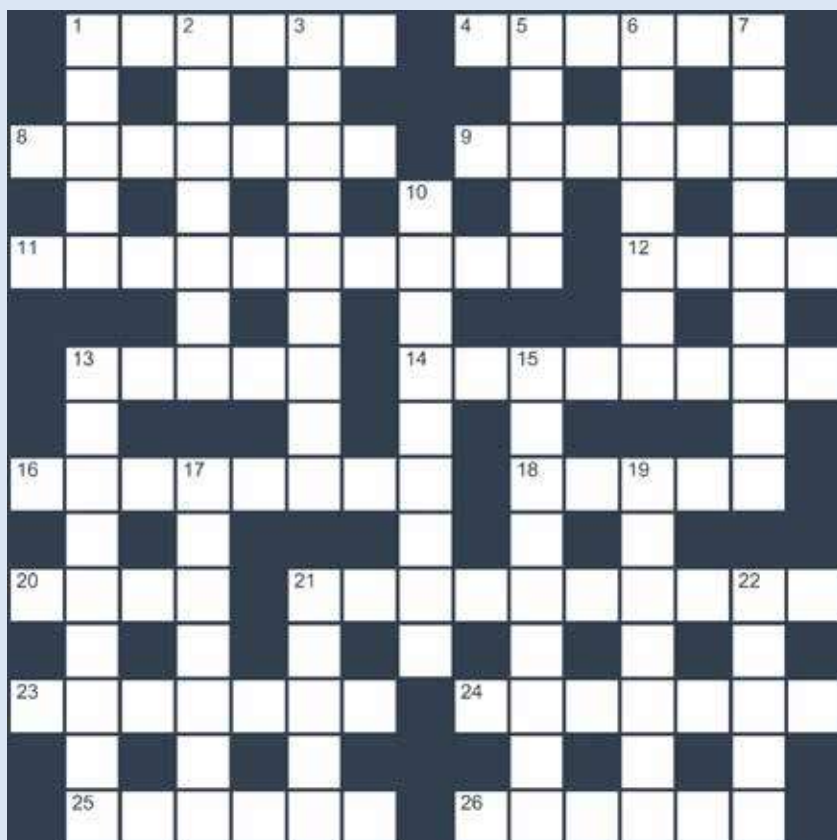
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DB 16

Crossword no 187



Across

- 1 ___ Roof of straw or reeds (6)
 4 Castle in Kelso, designed and built by the architect William Adam (6)
 8 Northamptonshire home of the Spencer family where Diana, Princess of Wales, is buried (7)
 9 19th century Scottish historian and essayist who lived in Chelsea (7)
 11 County in which the Ironbridge Gorge is situated (10)
 12 Sir ___ Coward, eminent playwright, producer, actor and composer (4)
 13 Gerald ___, British 20th century choral composer (5)
 14 Penultimate battle in the Wars of the Roses, fought on 22 August 1485 (8)
 16 Area of North London on the north-eastern corner of Hampstead Heath (8)
 18 River at Woodbridge in Suffolk (5)
 20 "Drake's ___", a patriotic poem by Sir Henry Newbolt (4)
 21 Unique megalithic monument on Salisbury Plain (10)
 23 The wife or widow of a duke (7)
 24 ___ House, Scottish Borders home of the Duke of Buccleuch (7)
 25 John Maynard ___, economist and member of the Bloomsbury Group (6)
 26 ___ Graves, Neolithic flint mines near Brandon in Norfolk (6)

Down

- 1 Cultivated land (5)
 2 Forest in East Sussex that once covered most of south-east England (7)
 3 Sister of the poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti who was also a poet (9)
 5 "For summer's ___ hath all too short a date" (Shakespeare, sonnet) (5)
 6 ___ Gibbons, a leading composer of the late Tudor and early Jacobean periods (7)
 7 Budleigh ___, town at the mouth of the River Otter in Devon (9)
 10 London suburb famous as the home of tennis championships since 1877 (9)
 13 One of Robin Hood's companions (5,4)
 15 Battle fought in 1685 between the forces of James II and the Duke of Monmouth (9)
 17 ___ Repton, one of the great English landscape gardeners of the 18th century (7)
 19 Sir Thomas ___, illustrious English conductor and impresario (7)
 21 ___ Cooper, renowned ceramic designer born in Stoke-on-Trent in 1902 (5)
 22 Red, in heraldry (5)

Visit discoverbritainmag.com for answers

SAY WHAT?

Can you identify which famous British figure uttered these words of wisdom?



A

"If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten"

B

"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen"

C

"Selfishness must always be forgiven you know, because there is no hope of a cure"

D

"I love children, especially when they cry, for then someone takes them away"

E

"I can't tell you if genius is hereditary, because heaven has granted me no offspring"

Turn to page 98 for answers

Solution to the last *Discover Britain* crossword

Across: 8 Windrush, 9 Ozone, 10 Bram, 11 Folkestone, 12 Merlin, 14 Emsworth, 15 Diocese, 17 Othello, 20 Paul Nash, 22 Blyton, 23 Thomas Arne, 24 Wren, 25 Lance, 26 Flourish.

Down: 1 Disraeli, 2 Adam, 3 Puffin, 4 Shelley, 5 Somerset, 6 Montgomery, 7 Kennet, 13 Loch Lomond, 16 Stansted, 18 Lyonesse, 19 Sheriff, 21 Atholl, 22 Bredon, 24 Wyre

D

ear Miss Manners,

For my recent birthday, my best friend thoughtfully gifted unto me a “selfie stick”. After it had been explained what the contraption was (I took it for a walking stick), I am left wondering how to respond to this present, which suggests that she, who has known me since childhood, has gleaned nothing of either my character or tastes these 60 years.

Yours, Perplexed

Dear Perplexed,

I sympathise with your quandary entirely for there are two questions at play here: first that of manners; second that of your friend suffering a taste bypass. As regards the first, the advice must, as ever, remain that you lead by example and send a thank you note within three days. As regards holding up a mirror to her erroneous judgement, your best option is surely to use that mirror substitute: the selfie stick itself. Lavish her with daily postcards of your face gurning at all manner of local landmarks: pouting at the post office, simpering at the supermarket, glowering at the garage. If that doesn't put her off selfie sticks for life, it might signal time to chuck both stick and friend for good. You simply cannot be seen in the company of anyone who would wield such a contraption. If only in the name of preserving *your* selfie-image.

Dear Miss Manners,

I find myself baffled by the modern world. My new boss – half my age and a holder of a degree in David Beckham studies or some such nonsense – will not stop using management speak to the effect that I do not know what he is talking about most of the time. This morning he suggested I was “onboarded” by other staff members in the ways of “client beverage management”. It was later explained that this was his way of saying: “We have a customer, please make a cup of tea,” a skill that I have no requirement to be “onboarded” to, since I am 67 and have known how to make a decent cuppa for six decades. I should add, I work at a hairdresser.

Yours, Exasperated



Modern manners

Miss Manners answers your questions of etiquette

Dear Exasperated,

I don't doubt your intense irritation. This kind of posturing is, after all, reserved for only the very limited. Do, then, in the first instance, try to forgive his folly; to understand all is to forgive all, they say. And they are sometimes right. But as a veteran tea-maker and speaker of plain English, employ your linguistic superiority to edify this poor misguided soul by behaving at all times as though he were a foreign language student. For example, every time he threatens to utter such nonsense as, say, “blue sky thinking”, respond very loudly and very slowly with the words: “Almost dear, but the correct idiom in English would be: ‘Look on the bright side.’” He'll either get the point... or you'll get the sack. But either way, it'll be a blessed relief to be shot of “helicopter views” (trans: “overview”), “end of play” (trans: “home time”) and “strategic

“Lavish her with daily postcards of your face gurning at local landmarks”

staircases” (trans.... erm, it really could mean anything, frankly).

Dear Miss Manners,

As Christmas looms large on the horizon, I find myself once more anguishing about how to handle my deathly dull and unforgivably rude sister-in-law. She offers absolutely nothing conversationally, socially, materially (not a single bottle of wine was proffered last year, despite her week-long stay), or in terms of practical help. But, if I don't invite her, I don't get to see my brother and nephews. Please tell me what I should do.

Yours, Aggrieved

Dear Aggrieved,

A common problem this, since every family has its resident miserly misery. But, my dear put-upon Aggrieved, it is vital never to be rude, no matter what discourtesy is flung in your direction. We are, after all, civilised people. I would advise going to the other extreme; transform yourself into a mildly terrifying Pollyanna/Mary Poppins hybrid, practically singing your conversation and whistling while you work (you need not commune with chirruping birds; that's a step too far). She'll be so alarmed that she'll muck in just so as not to risk you crossing over in to full demented Julie Andrews. Trill, too, that she go and buy some wine – she will doubtless welcome the chance to leave the house. And you may just find that she stays at home next year.

Dear Miss Manners,

Every year my husband and I argue over who gets to finish the mince pie left for Father Christmas. How can we settle the dispute this year?

Yours, Mince Pie lover

Dear Mince Pie lover,

Not exactly one for *University Challenge*, this. There are six mince pies in your average box, just get another – unnibbled – one out of the packet. Something tells me it's not the mince pies that are the problem here, but rather that Father C's leftover brandy has addled your brains. ■

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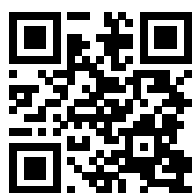


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